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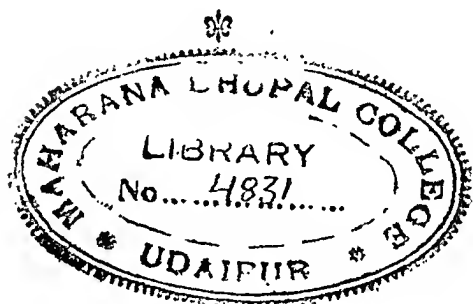
STORY POEMS FROM  
WILLIAM MORRIS



WILLIAM MORRIS  
*(Photograph by F. Hollzer)*

# Story Poems from William Morris

Edited by  
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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## I. THE AUTHOR

" You know one has fits of not caring for fishing and shooting a bit, and then I get through an enormous lot of reading ; and then another day, when one has one's rod in one's hand, one looks up and down the field, or sees the road winding along, and I can't help thinking of tales going on amongst it all, and long so for more and more books."

MORRIS.

*His Schoolboyish Disposition.*—William Morris, author of the two romances in this volume, was all his life long as much a schoolboy as that other great romancer, Sir Walter Scott. Like a schoolboy he preferred making things to reading about them—and he became the greatest craftsman of his time. Like a schoolboy, too, when he had not enough to occupy his time, he turned to "ragging." And again, like a schoolboy, he thoroughly enjoyed *Uncle Remus* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Like a bluff, ruddy ship-captain to look at, he was as active and tireless as if he had been one. He lived life with a zest. He packed a thousand sorts of skill into his little more than threescore years. And this extraordinary man was born under a lucky star, all the circumstances of his life working in his favour, and bringing his various gifts one by one to their full perfection.

*Birth.*—Born at Walthamstow on March 24, 1834, three years before the opening of Queen Victoria's reign, he was lucky in dwelling close to London and yet only a mile or two from Epping Forest, so wild and wide-stretching and so excellent a nurse for one later to denounce the ugliness of modern towns. Part English, part Welsh, in descent, his family hailed from Worcester; and fortune favouring his father's investment in a copper mine, they were well off.

*The Forest.*—In his seventh year, the Morrises crossed the Forest to Woodford Hall, a large mansion in fifty acres of grounds on the highroad, in old days highwayman-haunted, from Epping to London. So he actually spent his boyhood in the Forest, for him a tangled, bushy paradise. It was low-lying in all directions, but the boy had a wonderful eye for detail and a love of long distances and open skies, so he cared not a jot for that. Indeed, it was the kind of scenery he liked best—he was no Wordsworth august in his Lake District. The Forest's tintings, its every shape and line, filled his eye with satisfaction as he roamed freely about, fishing, or shooting rabbits and fieldfares and roasting them for his own supper—his highest ambition rather to shoot them with bow and arrow!—or on his pony galloping through the glades, a startling curly-haired vision, all decked out in a toy suit of armour, cuirassed and greaved, with sword in hand.

*School.*—What an ideal life for a hearty boy!—and no schooling till he was nine! He trotted daily then on his pony to a preparatory school "for young gentlemen"; but in his fourteenth year the break had to come, and he left home for Marlborough College, then new and slack. But again he was favoured: the school was on the skirts of the deer-haunted Saver-nake Forest, and close to the Wiltshire Druidic circles and ancient burial mounds. Now though he could fish or not better than spell—to the end of his life he made mistakes in quite simple words—he was a

reader, and some say he had read Scott's novels as a child of four (more probably he had pored over the engravings). However that may be, at Marlborough College he made such good use of the school library that he learnt all there need be learnt at his age of ancient history, and the architecture of old churches and cathedrals, and such things. Nor was this simply book-learning. He spent his whole holidays exploring ancient remains, or visiting old churches ; and more, he *lived* in the past. There was no effort in it : he did it by instinct. And, like young Walter Scott at the Edinburgh High School, he was a popular tale-teller—despite a habit of keeping aloof from the other fellows, and a fearful and celebrated temper. His passion was rather for collecting birds' eggs than for arithmetic or Latin ; but he was never known to be idle, for when he had no definite work to do his fingers would be actively netting, netting, netting. He was a craftsman born. All his life, in one way or another, he was to be actively "netting"—whether tapestry, or long narrative poems, or what else.

A letter to his sister while he was at college is the earliest specimen of his writing extant ; and in it he says, "It is now only seven weeks to the holidays ; there I go again ! Just like me ! always harping on the holidays. I am sure you must think me a great fool to be always thinking about home, but I really can't help it. I don't think it is my fault, for there are such a lot of things I want to do and say and see." The last sentence reveals how much the child was father of the man.

What he once saw he never forgot ; and seeing was one of his chief sources of pleasure. "I remember as a boy," he later said, "going into Canterbury Cathedral and thinking that the gates of heaven had been opened to me ; also when I first saw an illuminated manuscript. These first pleasures which I discovered for myself were stronger than anything

else I have had in life." One notices that he seemed to *think* a great deal; active as he was, he was always a dreamer—but a dreamer of things to do or say or make. He was a practical dreamer, like the craftsmen in the Middle Ages who built the great cathedrals. And the more he saw of modern life the more he wished that he had lived in the Middle Ages too.

*Oxford.*—His people decided that he should enter the Church, his tastes all pointing in that direction; and so after three years at Marlborough he returned home to read with a tutor, and in the Lent term of 1853 he entered Exeter College, Oxford. At the matriculation examination the previous year he had met one who was to be his lifelong friend and fellow-genius—Edward Burne-Jones, who was at that time also intending to take holy orders. And so at Oxford Morris was very happy, intermingling much reading with open-air excursions of every sort.

The set he was friendly with were Anglo-Catholic and Pre-Raphaelite in sympathy—that is, in Church matters they liked the introduction of more outward beauty than had been customary since Puritan days, more music, more colour, ornament, and ceremony. In Art and Poetry, they wanted two things at once—greater simplicity than, say, in complicated battle pictures, and also more decoration, such as bright flowers along the borders of the picture; they wanted to go back to the rich-coloured and childlike pictures painted in Italy before the days of Raphael (1483–1520). Rossetti was the chief figure in this "Pre-Raphaelite school," as it came to be known; and he wielded a great influence over Morris.

*Sense of Beauty.*—Such opinions appealed to William Morris largely because he had an abnormal sense of beauty, and perhaps a finer instinct for decoration than any other man in Europe. He was naturally at home in Oxford—in his time still a mediæval city—and loved its college buildings, its lawns, woods,



and waterways, all decorative and peaceful. He wondered why other towns were not beautiful like it. Then he read a famous chapter of Ruskin's, "On the Nature of Gothic," in which he found the answer: in the Middle Ages every man was a craftsman and fashioned things completely for himself, but in modern times workmen were only cogs in a huge machine and took no interest in what they made. This truth stung Morris to the quick, and henceforward directly and indirectly he was to preach the virtue of work suited to each man's natural gifts, and the production of beautiful and individual, as against standardized and mass-produced goods. No longer so keen on entering the Church, he yet had a mission—to preach Beauty, and Joy in Congenial Work. He had become a sworn enemy of the drab, smoky Victorian Age, in which he could but be "the idle singer of an *empty* day." But he was no spineless dreamer; and at Oxford he added to his already large number of accomplishments (one of which was cooking) those of boxing, fencing, and singlestick play.

*First Poetry.*—His nickname was Topsy, on account of his wild, curly mop of dark brown hair. One day in 1854, at Oxford, he read aloud to Burne-Jones his first poem. "As soon as we entered the room," wrote Dixon, one of the set, "Burne-Jones exclaimed wildly, 'He's a big poet!' 'Who is?' asked we. 'Why, Topsy.'" The very title of the poem, *The Willow and the Red Cliff*, shows Morris straightway a lover of simple words, and concrete, natural things, and their mere names and broad effects: he had a sort of fairy tale palette. And it was a simple yet strangely original poem. "Well," said Morris, "if this is poetry, it is very easy to write:" as for him it always was. Later he was to compose in railway trains, or while weaving tapestry and issuing instructions to workmen, here, there, and everywhere; and in a single day he was to "net" seven hundred lines of *Jason*.

In 1856, he and others started the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, in which his first published work appeared—five poems, and a number of short prose romances.

*Starts Life.*—On coming of age he inherited nearly a thousand pounds a year. Some time later, when Burne-Jones and he were on a tour in Normandy, they decided to give up the idea of the Church, but with as lofty aims to go in for art—Burne-Jones taking up painting, Morris architecture. Morris, having taken his B.A., articulated himself to the firm of Street, and soon moved to London. He took rooms in Bloomsbury, but when it came to furnishing them, he could not find in the shops any furniture or decorations that would suit,—he had to design his own. And he *liked* the task.

In less than a year he abandoned architecture for painting, at Rossetti's advice.

*Low Ebb of Domestic Arts.*—In 1859, when he was twenty-five, he married Miss Jane Burden at Oxford. He now wanted a house. Unable to find one to his taste, he designed his own, and had it built—the Red House, near Bexley. He wanted appointments for the house. Again, as none suitable were to be had, he designed his own. Even then it was exceedingly hard to get manufacturers to help; so did he come to see that the crying need of his time was for beautiful houses and beautiful furniture and decorative effects. Reform could come only from practical example, wherefore he started his own business firm (1861) for supplying everything to furnish and equip houses, churches, and public buildings.

*Starts in Business.*—He learnt every craft himself, and enjoyed it, whether it was that of dyeing, carving, stained-glass making, metal-work, jewellery cutting, embroidering, tapestry weaving, or whatever else. He originated new designs in all departments of decoration. The firm developed, finally became a success,

indeed still flourishes; and it is chiefly through Morris's efforts that the drab Victorian effects have given place to the colour harmonies and bright tints of the present day. He literally changed the face of modern life.

Still he had not enough to do: "for me to rest from work means to die." Friendly though he was, work always came first: "he would not give an hour of his time to any one, he held it to be too valuable." His mad capers when work eased off were sometimes the terror of his associates. It was his joke when angry with someone to exclaim like Mr. F.'s Aunt, "Bring him for'ard, and I'll chuck him out o' winder" He was two-sided in character. He liked to fancy himself sometimes as the Arthurian knight Sir Tristram, or the Viking hero Sigurd; but in less serious mood it was rather as some whimsical Dickensian Boffin or Joe Gargery, with a "Morning, morning" or "Wot lacks!"

*Writing his Hobby.*—In addition to his hundred other activities he always read hard, and best of all he loved Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Under their influence he frequently wrote. A collection of dramatic ballads he published in 1859 as *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*. A good first volume, it yet did not bring him recognition. Like tapestry, poetry for him was to become rather a matter of great surfaces steadily woven; and he next began to write long narrative poems of a kind altogether new in English. Thus, in 1867, when he was thirty-three, came *The Life and Death of Jason*, and fame.

## II. HOW JASON CAME TO BE WRITTEN

"If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry, he had better shut up, he'll never do any good at all."  
MORRIS.

*Morris's Dream World.*—Wherever he turned, Morris saw the evils of industrialism. Life had become so smoke-begrimed and vulgar that beauty had fled to the remote countryside; and poetry was reduced to seeking its stories and settings in the past. To escape the ugliness around him, he fled in thought to the Middle Ages and to the palmy days of Greece; and gradually he saw that by creating his own world there in poetry he could show others how life ought to be lived, and amidst what scenes of nature and art. The plain world was lacking, so he would give substance to his dreams. Others reading his words might then join him in dissatisfaction with modern conditions: at least they would share his inheritance of beauty worship, and

"Forget six counties overhung with smoke,  
Forget the snorting steam and piston-stroke,  
Forget the spreading of the hideous town:"

So did he undertake to tell a great series of old stories as Chaucer had done in the *Canterbury Tales*, and of which more will be related in the Introduction to *Cupid and Psyche* (see p. 169). However, the first three, taken from Greek legend, proved too unwieldy for the series, and *Jason*, the best of them, was published by itself (the other two were abandoned) in June 1867.

*Narrative Poetry: Why?*—It was instinctive for Morris to choose the narrative form. This might have been because, like Scott, action and movement were

his element, or because narrative afforded the motive for introducing tapestried pictures of dress and background: perhaps both were involved, but certainly he had not Scott's supremely direct sense of action. It is very difficult to excel in narrative poetry. It means not only the conduct of a story and the handling of dramatic incidents, but the constant tracing in action of the character of the chief figures, and the accumulation of such details of manners, customs, dress, and scene as will produce a definite atmosphere. A great narrative poem is more like a play of Shakespeare's than like an old ballad, only it is simpler.

Narrative being the form, a story had to be chosen. With Morris it had to be a story of a perfect land with beautiful externals, and with freedom for every one to pursue a full life according to his own character and gifts. An ideal Ancient Greece was the obvious place. Then, too, Morris had an abiding sense of the shortness of life, and the necessity of giving life colour and worth by brave deeds or the making of beautiful things. If life were a great hall, then it needed a feast set and bright tapestry on the walls to relieve it from resembling a barn. Wherefore Morris's favourite idea for a story was that of a heroic lover undergoing great physical trials for the sake of winning his bride. The story of Jason, therefore, who made his perilous voyage for the Golden Fleece in the Greek age of discovery and exploration, and won for his bride the beautiful sorceress Medea, was ideal.

*Collecting his Materials.*—Long attracted to the story, he had yet to procure materials for a detailed picture. Like any schoolboy he first consulted his Lemprière's Classical Dictionary under such headings as: ARGONAUTÆ, JASON, MEDEA, PHRYXUS, HELLE, and the like. From the articles on these he gathered an idea of the sundry versions of the story, and obtained a list of the classical authors who have handed them down to us. He learnt that the original epic of

the Argonauts is lost, but that from it in the third century B.C. the Alexandrian librarian, Apollonius of Rhodes, wrote his poem *Argonautica*, which is extant. This book furnished most of what Morris wanted. For incidents in Jason's young days, however, Morris consulted another old writer, Apollodorus (second century B.C.), who wrote a history of the gods and ancient heroes. With a hint from one or two other Greek and Latin authors, and the resolve to tone down anything repugnant to modern taste, and to invent his own incidents, speeches, and scenes whenever requisite, Morris was able to go forward with the poem.

He safely got his hero into the Black Sea and the Land of the Golden Fleece, and safely got him the Fleece itself, but it was a pretty problem how to carry him home again. Jason could not go home the way he had come, because enemies in overwhelming numbers were lying in wait to attack him at the straits. The Ancient Greeks themselves were at odds on the point. Pindar made him return by China and the Indian Ocean! Apollonius sent him 150 miles overland with his ship to the Adriatic Sea, and thence by the Mediterranean home. Morris, who liked the Saxon and Viking North of Europe only second to Greece, decided on a fresh route taking in the Dnieper from the Black Sea, the Vistula to the Baltic, and the return by the North Sea—a quite impossible undertaking, but only in keeping with mediæval marvels (and this Greek poem, as we shall see, *was* really mediæval). Indeed, by omitting place-names, and shrouding everything in mystery, the strange route he chose became passably credible.

*Style and Characters.*—To conceive a graceful and brave Jason, with no particular difference from any other graceful and brave hero, was the work of a moment. The heroine, Medea, was more problematic. Anciently a wildcat of a woman, she would not answer Morris's modern demands: the Greeks might despise

her as a barbarian, but at this distance of time prejudice might well be forgotten. She should be above all gentle, a most alluring and faithful wife, but passionate and capable of pitiless hate, a dream-figure that might at any moment turn the dream to nightmare. As for the other characters, they should be merely indicated, like heads in a crowd.

For the style, it should be as utterly simple as the English language would allow. Simplicity was the keynote of Greek art: it was equally that of Chaucer and the Middle Ages. No attempt should be made to present the story strictly true to its Greek period, for it was to be cast as a mediæval romance, with the scene an enchanted clime, "out of place, out of time," where Argos was a red-gabled town with swinging bells like Bruges or Chartres. It should be the dream of a mediæval poet; and simplicity, with a dash of old-fashioned words like "spake" and "clomb" would suggest the right atmosphere. If birds were to be mentioned, they should be the simplest, and mentioned again and again: the favourite, the nightingale, should indeed always be just "the brown bird." If flowers, they should not be birdsfoot trefoil or shepherd's purse, but always roses, lilies, sunflowers, violets, or daisies. There should be no local detail of the sea, only expressions like "the water wan" (which occurs hundreds of times). No particular passages should be "purple" to the grey of the rest: all should be a uniform dim blue.

Such a style befits loom-made poetry and the author who was so busy "netting" at school. The result is a coloured, uniform fabric of exquisite beauty, to be read very slowly with dreamy simplicity. Its 13,000 lines (reduced in this book almost to a half by omitting some less necessary tapestry-work) were quickly written, but show no signs of hasty workmanship, since all Morris's life had gone to its preparation. "All passes," writes Professor Elton, "as a pageant

in a crystal." Its sound is "the prolonged sleepy lapping of a metre that flows like a lullaby," wrote Dixon Scott, "like the murmur on a midsummer beach, the very accent of earthly content."

And unlike *Paradise Lost*, with which the dreamer Morris had little sympathy, it starts at the *beginning*—the birth of Jason, in the dim early days of Greece, a generation before the time of the Trojan War and the great epics of Homer.

### III. HOW TO READ THE POEM

"It makes me laugh to be in the position of nuisance to schoolboys."—MORRIS, in a letter to the Headmaster of the Forest School.

(a) On a second or later reading, two maps should be drawn—one of Ancient Greece showing all places given in the text, the other of Europe with a red ink indication of the route followed by Argo. Main approximate distances should be marked.

(b) It should be noted that, in accordance with old practice, Greek not being studied in England in the Middle Ages, Morris usually employs the Latin names of gods and goddesses. To-day the Greek form is preferred.

(c) On a first reading the notes at the foot of the pages should be consulted only to solve real difficulties of meaning. On a second or later reading they may all be read, and the hints for observation followed.



# STORY POEMS FROM WILLIAM MORRIS

## THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON

### A POEM

#### ARGUMENT

Jason, the son of Æson, king of Iolchos, having come to man's estate, demanded of Pelias his father's kingdom, which he held wrongfully. But Pelias answered, that if he would bring from Colchus the golden fleece of the ram that had carried Phryxus thither, he would yield him his right. Whereon Jason sailed to Colchus in the ship Argo, with other heroes, and by means of Medea, the king's daughter, won the fleece, and carried off also Medea; and so, after many troubles, came back to Iolchos again. There, by Medea's wiles, was Pelias slain; but Jason went to Corinth, and lived with Medea happily, till he was taken with the love of Glauce, the king's daughter of Corinth, and must needs wed her; whom also Medea destroyed, and fled to Ægeus at Athens; and not long after Jason died strangely.

#### BOOK I

IN Thessaly, beside the tumbling sea,  
Once dwelt a folk, men called the Minyæ;  
For, coming from Orchomenus the old,  
Bearing their wives and children, beasts and gold,  
Through many a league of land they took their way,  
And stopped at last, where in a sunny bay

*Orchomenus*, In Bœotia, north-west of Lake Copais; a town founded by Orchomenus, son of Minyas—hence the origin of the names.

The green Anaurus cleaves the white sea-sand,  
 And eastward inland doth Mount Pelion stand,  
 Where bears and wolves the centaurs' arrows find ;  
 And southward is a gentle sea and kind,  
 Nigh landlocked, peopled with all kinds of fish,  
 And the good land yields all that man can wish.

So there they built Iolchos, that each day  
 Grew great until all these were passed away,  
 With many another, and Cretheus the king  
 Had died, and left his crown and everything  
 To Æson, his own son by fair Tyro ;  
 Whom, in unhappy days and long ago,  
 A God had loved, whose son was Pelias.

And so, within a while, it came to pass  
 This Pelias, being covetous and strong  
 And full of wiles, and deeming naught was wrong  
 That wrought him good, thrust Æson from his throne,  
 And over all the Minyæ reigned alone ;  
 While Æson, like a poor and feeble lord,  
 Dwelt in Iolchos still, nor was his word  
 Regarded much by any man therein,  
 Nor did men labour much his praise to win.

Now 'mid all this a fair young son he had ;  
 And when his state thus fell from good to bad  
 He thought, " Though Pelias leave me now alone  
 Yet he may wish to make quite sure his throne  
 By slaying me and mine, some evil day ;  
 Therefore the child will I straight send away,  
 Ere Pelias feels his high seat tottering,  
 And gets to know the terrors of a king,  
 That blood alone can deaden." Therewithal  
 A faithful slave unto him did he call,  
 And bade him from his nurses take the child

*Anaurus*, A stream in Magnesia, a district of Thessaly.

*Centaurs*, Literally "bull-goaders," a race of beings half men and half horses, perhaps representing an early idea of men on horseback.

*A God*, Enipeus, a river-god ; or else Neptune.

*Pelias*, Literally lead-coloured, from a bruise on his face.

And bear him forth unto the forest wild  
About the foot of Pelion : There should he  
Blow loudly on a horn of ivory  
That Æson gave him ; then would come to him  
A Centaur, grave of face and large of limb,  
Before whom he should fall upon his knees -  
And, holding forth the child, say words like these :  
“ ‘ O my lord Chiron, Æson sends me here  
To say, if ever you have held him dear,  
Take now this child, his son, and rear him up  
Till we have fully drained the bitter cup  
The fates have filled for us ; and if times change  
While through the peaceful oakwood here you range,  
And the crown comes upon the youngling's head,  
Then, though a king right fair appavelled,  
Yet unto you shall he be but a slave,  
Since now from fear his tender years you save ; ’  
“ And then,” quoth Æson, “ all these words being  
said,  
Hold out this ring, set with a ruby red,  
Adorned with dainty little images,  
And this same horn, whereon, ’twixt carven trees,  
Diana follows up the flying hart ;  
They shall be signs of truth upon your part.  
Then leave the child with him ; and come to me,  
Minding what words the Centaur saith to thee ;  
Of whom thou needest have no whit of fear.”

Now, since the moonless night and dark was come,  
Time was it that the child should leave his home ;  
And saddled in the court the stout horse stood  
That was to bear them to the Centaur's wood ;  
And the tried slave stood ready by his lord  
With wallet on his back, and sharpened sword.  
Then, being mounted, forth into the night  
They rode, and thus has Jason left his home.

All night they rode, and at the dawn, being come  
Unto the outskirts of the forest wild,

They left the horse, and the still sleeping child  
The slave bore in his arms, until they came  
Unto the place where, living free from blame,  
Chiron the old roamed through the oaken wood.  
Until at last in sight the Centaur drew,

A mighty grey horse, trotting down the glade,  
Over whose back the long grey locks were laid,  
That from his reverend head abroad did flow ;  
For to the waist was man, but all below

A mighty horse, once roan, now well-nigh white  
With lapse of years ; with oak-wreaths was he dight  
Where man joined unto horse, and on his head  
He wore a gold crown, set with rubies red,  
And in his hand he bare a mighty bow,  
No man could bend of those that battle now.

So, when he saw him coming through the trees,  
The trembling slave sunk down upon his knees  
And put the child before him ; but Chiron,  
Who knew all things, cried : " Man with Æson's  
son,

Thou needest not to tell me who thou art,  
Nor will I fail to do to him my part :

A vain thing were it, truly, if I strove,  
Such as I am, against the will of Jove.

Lo ! now, this youngling, set 'twixt thee and me  
In days to come a mighty man shall be,  
Well-nigh the mightiest of all those that dwell  
Between Olympus and Malea ; and well  
Shall Juno love him till he come to die.

*Roan*, Of one colour variegated with patches of another—e.g., chest-nut mixed with white.

*Dight*, Decked.

*Jove*, King of the Gods ; in Greek, Zeus.

*Olympus and Malca*, The northern and southern extremes of Greece.

Olympus, a mountain on the northern border of Thessaly ; on its summit (10,000 feet) stood the palaces of the Gods. Malca, a cape in the Peloponnesus.

*Juno*, Wife of Jove ; in Greek, Hera.

“ Now get thee to thy master presently,  
But leave with me the red ring and the horn,  
That folk may know of whom this boy was born  
In days to come, when he shall leave this wild :  
And lay between my arms the noble child.”  
So the slave joyful, but still half afraid,  
Within the mighty arms young Jason laid,  
And gave up both the horn and the red ring  
Unto the Centaur, who the horn did sling  
About him ; on his finger, with a smile,  
Setting the ring ; and in a little while  
The slave departing, reached the open plain,  
And straight he mounted on his horse again,  
And rode on toward Iolchos all the day,  
And as the sunset darkened every way,  
He reached the gates, and coming to his lord,  
Bid him rejoice, and told him every word  
That Chiron said. Right glad was Æson then  
That from his loins a great man among men  
Should thus have sprung ; and so he passed his days  
Full quietly, remote from fear or praise.

(Meanwhile Pelias, dreading punishment for his evil  
deeds, built a temple to the goddess Juno.)

Moreover, to Dodona, where the doves  
Amid the oak-trees murmur of their loves,  
He sent a messenger to know his fate ;  
Who, up the temple steps, beneath the weight  
Of precious things went bending ; and being come  
Back from the north to his Thessalian home,  
Gave forth this answer to the doubtful king :  
“ O Pelias, fearful of so many a thing,

*Darkened every way*, A Homeric expression.

*Dodona*, In Epirus, or on the border of Thessaly ; seat of the most  
ancient Greek oracle. The answers were given by the rustling  
of the oaks in a grove about the temple of Jupiter. Priestesses  
interpreted the rustlings. It was supposed that a black dove  
from Egypt had first indicated the sacredness of the place ;  
and doves frequently gave oracular responses there.

Sit merry o'er thy wine, sleep safe and soft,  
 Within thy golden bed ; for surely oft  
 The snows shall fall before the half-shod man  
 Can come upon thee through the water wan."

So at this word the king along the shore  
 Built many a tower, and still more and more  
 Drew men unto him skilled in spear and bow ;  
 And through the streets full often would he go  
 Beset with guards, and for the rest began  
 To be a terror unto every man.

And yet indeed were all these things but vain,  
 For at the foot of Pelion grew his bane  
 In strength and comeliness from day to day,  
 And swiftly passed his childish years away :  
 Unto whom Chiron taught the worthy lore  
 Of elders who the wide world filled before ;  
 And how to forge his iron arrow-heads ;  
 And how to find within the marshy steads  
 The stoutest reeds, and from some slain bird's wing  
 To feather them, and make a deadly thing ;  
 And through the woods he took him, nor would spare  
 To show him how the just-awakened bear  
 Came hungry from his tree, or show him how  
 The spotted leopard's lurking-place to know ;  
 And many a time they brought the hart to bay,  
 Or smote the boar at hottest of the day.

(One morn in the woods did Jason meet a seeming  
 huntress.)

" Jason," she said, " all folk shall know thy name,  
 For verily the Gods shall give thee fame,

*Half-shod*, With one sandal on, and one off.

*Water wan*, A stock expression in this poem. *Wan* is used in its  
 archaic sense of dark, or black,—here the meaning is "dark  
 blue."

*Bane*, Fated cause of his downfall.

*Iron arrow-heads*, An anachronism ; even a generation later, during  
 the Trojan War, bronze alone was used.

*Steads*, Places.

Whatever they keep back from thee : behold  
Restless thou shalt be, as thou now art bold ;  
And cunning, as thou now art skilled to watch  
The crafty bear, and in the toils to catch  
The grey-maned yellow lion ; and now see  
Thou doest my commands, for certainly  
I am no mortal ; so to Chiron tell  
No longer is it fitting thou shouldst dwell  
Here in the wilds, but in a day or two,  
Clad in Magnesian garments, shalt thou go  
Unto Iolchos, and there claim thine own.  
And unto thee shall Chiron first make known  
The story of thy father and thy kin,  
That thou mayst know what right thou hast herein."

Then Jason fell a-trembling, and to him  
The tall green stems grew wavering and dim ;  
And when a fresh gust of the morning breeze  
Came murmuring along the forest trees,  
And woke him as from dreaming, all alone  
He stood, and with no farewell she was gone,  
Leaving no traces of her dainty feet.

But through the leaves ambrosial odours sweet  
Yet floated as he turned to leave the place,  
And with slow steps, and thinking on his case,  
Went back to Chiron, whom he found laid there  
Half sleeping on the thymy herbage fair,  
To whom he told the things that he had heard,  
With flushed and eager face, for they had stirred  
New thoughts within him of the days to come ;  
So that he longed to leave his woodland home.

Then Chiron said : " O fair son, thou shalt go,  
Since now, at last, the Gods will have it so :  
And know that till thou comest to the end  
Of thy loved life, shall Juno be thy friend,  
Because the lovely huntress thou didst see  
Late in the greenwood certainly was she

*Ambrosial*, Divinely fragrant ; ambrosia was the food of the Gods.

Who sits in heaven beside Almighty Jove,  
And noble things they do that have her love.

"Now, son, to-day I rede thee not to go,  
Nor yet to-morrow, for clouds great and slow  
Are gathering round the hill-tops, and I think  
The thirsty fields full many a draught will drink ;  
Therefore to-day our cups shall not be dry,  
But we will sit together, thou and I,  
And tales of thy forefathers shalt thou hear,  
And many another, till the heavens clear."

So was it as the Centaur said ; for soon  
The woods grew dark, as though they knew no  
noon ;

The thunder growled about the high brown hills,  
And the thin, wasted, shining summer rills  
Grew joyful with the coming of the rain,  
And doubtfully was shifting every vane  
On the town spires, with changing gusts of wind ;  
Till came the storm-blast, furious and blind.

Meanwhile, within a pleasant lighted place,  
Stretched upon warm skins, did the Centaur lie,  
And nigh him Jason, listening eagerly  
The tales he told him, asking, now and then,  
Strange questions of the race of vanished men :  
Nor were the wine-cups idle ; till at last  
Desire of sleep over their bodies passed,  
And in their dreamless rest the wind in vain  
Howled round about, with washing of the rain.

## BOOK II

So there they lay until the second dawn  
Broke fair and fresh o'er glittering glade and lawn ;

*Rede, Advise.* An archaism.

*The thunder growled, etc.* Note the onomatopœia : the sound a perfect echo to the sense.

*Broke fair, etc.* Notice the devices used in this line to heighten the sound effect.



Then Jason rose, and did on him a fair  
Blue woollen tunic, such as folk do wear  
On the Magnesian cliffs, and at his thigh  
An iron-hilted sword hung carefully ;  
And on his head he had a russet hood ;  
And in his hand two spears of cornel-wood  
Well steeled and bound with brazen bands he shook.

Then from the Centaur's hands at last he took  
The tokens of his birth, the ring and horn,  
And so stept forth into the sunny morn,  
And bade farewell to Chiron, and set out  
With eager heart, that held small care or doubt.

So lightly through the well-known woods he passed,  
And came out to the open plain at last,  
And went till night came on him, and then slept  
Within a homestead that a poor man kept ;  
And rose again at dawn, and slept that night  
Nigh the Anaurus, and at morrow's light  
Rose up and went unto the river's brim ;  
But fearful seemed the passage unto him,  
For swift and yellow drave the stream adown  
'Twixt crumbling banks ; and tree-trunks rough and  
brown

Whirled in the bubbling eddies here and there ;  
So swollen was the stream a maid might dare  
To cross, in fair days, with unwetted knee.

Then Jason with his spear-shaft carefully  
Sounded the depth, nor any bottom found ;  
And wistfully he cast his eyes around  
To see if help was nigh, and heard a voice  
Behind him, calling out, " Fair youth, rejoice  
That I am here to help, or certainly  
Long time a dweller hereby shouldst thou be."

*Cornel*, Cherry.

*Drave*, An archaic form of "drove." *Adown*, Archaic form of "down." Collect as you go on further examples of the employment of these Anglo-Saxon and Middle English archaisms. What effect do they produce?

Then Jason turned round quickly, and beheld  
A woman bent with burdens and with eld,  
Grey and broad-shouldered ; so he laughed, and  
said :

" O mother, wilt thou help me ? by my head,  
More help than thine I need upon this day."

" O son," she said, " needs must thou on thy way ;  
And is there any of the giants here  
To bear thee through this water without fear ?  
Take, then, the help a God has sent to thee,  
For in mine arms a small thing shalt thou be."

So Jason laughed no more, because a frown  
Gathered upon her brow, as she cast down  
Her burden to the earth, and came anigh,  
And raised him in her long arms easily,  
And stept adown into the water cold.

There with one arm the hero did she hold,  
And with the other thrust the whirling trees  
Away from them ; and laughing, and with ease  
Went through the yellow foaming stream, and came  
Unto the other bank ; and little shame  
Had Jason that a woman carried him,  
For no man, howsoever strong of limb,  
Had dared across that swollen stream to go,  
But if he wished the Stygian stream to know ;  
Therefore he doubted not, that with some God  
Or reverend Goddess that rough way he trod.

So when she had clomb up the slippery bank  
And let him go, well-nigh adown he sank,  
For he was dizzy with the washing stream,  
And with that passage mazed as with a dream.

But, turning round about unto the crone,  
He saw not her, but a most glorious one,

*Take, then, the help, etc.* Note that this couplet is monosyllabic.  
Find others.

*But if, Unless* (archaic).

*Stygian stream*, The Styx, that flowed nine times round hell. Its  
water possessed deadly properties.

*Crone*, Withered old woman.

A lady clad in blue, all glistening  
With something more than gold, crowned like the king  
Of all the world, and holding in her hand  
A jewelled rod. So when he saw her stand  
With unsoiled feet scarce touching the wet way,  
He trembled sore, but therewith heard her say.—

“O Jason, such as I have been to thee  
Upon this day, such ever will I be ;  
And I am Juno ; therefore doubt thou not  
A mighty helper henceforth thou hast got  
Against the swords and bitter tongues of men,  
For surely mayst thou lean upon me, when  
The turbulent and little-reasoning throng  
Press hard upon thee, or a king with wrong  
Would fain undo thee, as thou leanedst now  
Within the yellow stream \* so from no blow  
Hold back thine hand, nor fear to set thine heart  
On what thou deemest fits thy kingly part

“Now to the king’s throne this day draw anear,  
Because of old time I have set a fear  
Within his heart, ere yet thou hadst gained speech,  
And whilst thou wanderedst beneath oak and beech,  
Unthinking. And, behold ! so have I wrought,  
That with thy coming shall a sign be brought  
Unto him ; for the latchet of thy shoe  
Rushing Anaurus late I bade undo,  
Which now is carried swiftly to the sea.

“So Pelias, this day setting eyes on thee,  
Shall not forget the shameful trickling blood  
Adown my altar-steps, or in my wood  
The screaming peacocks scared by other screams,  
Nor yet to-night shall he dream happy dreams.

“Farewell then, and be joyful, for I go  
Unto the people many a thing to show,

*Latchet*, The thong for fastening the sandal  
*Blood* Pelias and his brother Neleus had slain Sidero for cruelty  
to her stepdaughter Tyro, who was their mother.  
*Peacocks*, Birds sacred to Juno

And set them longing for forgotten things,  
Whose rash hands toss about the crowns of kings."

Now Jason, by Anaurus left alone,  
Found that, indeed, his right-foot shoe was gone.  
But, as the Goddess bade him, went his way  
Half shod, and by an hour before mid-day  
He reached the city gates, and entered there,  
Whom the folk mocked, beholding his foot bare,  
And iron-hilted sword, and uncouth weed:  
But of no man did he take any heed.

So in a while he came where there was set  
Pelias the king, judging the people there.

Now, when the yellow head of Jason broke  
From out the throng, with fearless eyes and grey,  
A terror took the king, that ere that day  
For many a peaceful year he had not felt,  
And his hand fell upon his swordless belt;  
But when the hero strode up to the throne,  
And set his unshod foot upon the stone  
Of the last step thereof, and as he stood,  
Drew off the last fold of his russet hood,  
And with a clang let fall his brass-bound spear,  
The king shrunk back, grown pale with deadly  
fear;

Nor then the oak-trees' speech did he forget,  
Noting the one bare foot, and garments wet,  
And something half remembered in his face.

And now nigh silent was the crowded place,  
For through the folk remembrance Juno sent,  
And soon from man to man a murmur went,  
And frowning folk were whispering deeds of shame  
And wrong the king had wrought, and Æson's name,  
Forgotten long, was bandied all about,  
And silent mouths seemed ready for a shout.

So, when the king raised up a hand, that shook  
With fear, and turned a wrathful, timorous look

*Weed, Garment.*

*Oak-trees' speech, The oracle of Dodona.*

On his Ætolian guards, upon his ears  
There fell the clashing of the people's spears ;  
And on the house-tops round about the square  
Could he behold folk gathered here and there,  
And see the sunbeams strike on brass and steel.  
But therewithal, though new fear did he feel,  
He thought, " Small use of arms in this distress,—  
Needs is it that I use my wiliness ; "  
Then spoke aloud : " O man, what wouldst thou here,  
That bearest thus a king with little fear ? "

" Pelias," he said, " I will not call thee king,  
Because thy crown is but a stolen thing,  
And with a stolen sceptre dost thou reign,  
Which now I bid thee render up again,  
And on his father's throne my father set,  
Whom for long years the Gods did well forget,  
But now, in lapse of time, remembering,  
Have raised me, Jason, up to do this thing,  
His son, and son of fair Alcimidé ;  
Yet now, since thou my father's brother art, |  
In no wise would I hurt thee, for my part,  
If thou wilt render to us but our own,  
And still shalt thou stand nigh my father's throne."

Then all the people, when aright they knew,  
That this was Æson's son, about them drew,  
And when he ended gave a mighty shout ;  
But Pelias cleared his face of fear and doubt,  
And answered Jason, smiling cunningly :

" Yea, in good time thou comest unto me,  
My nephew Jason ; fain would I lay down  
This heavy weight and burden of a crown,  
And have instead my brother's love again,  
I lost to win a troublous thing and vain ;  
And yet, since now thou showest me such goodwill,  
Fain would I be a king a short while still,

*Ætolian guards*, From Ætolia in central Greece.  
*Beardest*. To beard is to defy openly.  
*Alcimidé*, Wife of Æson.

That everything in order I may set,  
 Nor any man thereby may trouble get.  
 And now I bid thee stand by me to-day,  
 And cast all fear and troublous thoughts away ;  
 And for thy father Æson will I send,  
 That I may see him as a much-loved friend,  
 Now that these years of bitterness are passed,  
 And peaceful days are come to me at last."

With that, from out the press grave Æson came,  
 E'en as he spoke ; for to his ears the fame  
 Of Jason's coming thither had been brought ;  
 Wherefore, with eager eyes his son he sought ;  
 But, seeing the mighty hero great of limb,  
 Stopped short, with eyes set wistfully on him,  
 While a false honeyed speech the king began :

" Hail, brother Æson, hail, O happy man !  
 To-day thou winnest back a noble son,  
 Whose glorious deeds this hour sees begun,  
 And from my hands thou winnest back the crown  
 Of this revered and many-peopled town ;  
 So let me win from thee again thy love,  
 Nor with long anger slight the Gods above."

Then Jason, holding forth the horn and ring,  
 Said to his father, " Doubtest thou this thing ?  
 Behold the tokens Chiron gave to me  
 When first he said that I was sprung from thee."

Then little of those signs did Æson reck,  
 But cast his arms about the hero's neck.

Wherefore unto him, like an empty dream,  
 The busy place, the king and folk did seem,  
 As on that sight at last he set his eyes,  
 Prayed for so oft with many a sacrifice ;  
 And speechless for a while fain must he stand,  
 Holding within his hand the mighty hand ;  
 Until at last he said : " All honour now

*Press, Crowd* (archaic).

*Dream.* Notice whether this word occurs often or not. If it does, it would seem to be a clue to the character of the poem.

To Jove and all the Gods ! Surely, I know,  
Henceforth my name shall never perish more.

“ And as for thee, O Pelias, as I may,  
Will I be friend to thee from this same day ;  
And since we both of us are growing old,  
And both our lives will soon be as tales told,  
I think perchance that thou wilt let me be,  
To pass these few years in felicity  
That this one brings me.”

Thereon Pelias said :

“ Yea, if I hurt thee aught, then on my head  
Be every curse that thou canst ever think ;  
And dying, of an ill draught may I drink,  
For in my mind is nought but wish for rest.

“ But on this day, I pray thee, be my guest,  
While yet upon my head I wear the crown,  
Which, ere this morning's flowers have fallen down,  
Your head shall bear again ; for in the hall,  
Upon the floor the fresh-plucked rushes fall,  
Even as we speak, and maids and men bear up  
The kingly service ; many a jewelled cup  
And silver platter ; and the fires roar  
About the stalled ox and the woodland boar.”

Such good words said he, but the thoughts were bad  
Within his crafty breast ; and still he thought  
How best he might be rid of him just brought,  
By sentence of the Gods, upon his head.

Then moved the kinsmen from the market-stead  
Into the palace, where right royally  
Was Jason clad, and seemed a prince indeed.

So while the harp-string and shrill-piping reed  
Still sounded, trooped the folk unto the feast,  
And all were set to meat, both most and least ;  
And when with dainties they were fully fed,  
Then the tall jars and well-sewn goat-skins bled,

*Be every curse, etc.* Note the dramatic irony.

*Stalled ox*, Ox fattened in his stall.

*Reed*, The seven-reeded pan-pipe.

(2,563)

*Goat-skins*, Containing wine.

3

## 34 STORY POEMS FROM MORRIS

And men grew glad, forgetting every care.  
 Until at last, when twilight was nigh gone  
 And dimly through the place the gold outshone,  
 He bade them bring in torches, and while folk  
 Blinked on the glare that through the pillars broke,  
 He said to Jason: "Yet have I to tell  
 One tale I would that these should hear as well  
 As you, O Prince." And therewith did he call  
 The herald, bidding him throughout the hall  
 Cry silence for the story of the king.

(The king then told the following tale of the Golden Fleece:

Athamas, king of Thebes in Bœotia, had two children, a boy Phryxus, and Helle a girl. But tiring of his wife Nephele, he put her aside, and married the beautiful yet cruel Ino. He had two more children; but as Phryxus and Helle were the true heirs to the crown, Ino was jealous, and plotted their destruction.

She caused the women of the land, all unknown to the men, to seethe (*i.e.* boil) the good seed corn, which then in its season brought forth no harvest, and a famine set in. The country folk imploring the king to make peace with whatever god was angry, Athamas consulted the priests, who, being bribed by Ino, told him that Diana was offended; for the ex-queen Nephele, at one time vowed to her service, had yet married. The king therefore must sacrifice the children Phryxus and Helle, or a worse famine would ensue.

However, it so happened that in the court was kept a mighty ram possessed of two wings that seemed of gold, and a fleece that was veritably golden. To feed this ram was the task of Nephele, who now by mystic spells, and the favour of Diana, caused it to dash aside the sacrificers, and bear the intended victims afar off, through the sky.

On, on they flew, but in time Helle lost her hold and fell to her death in the strait since named the Hellespont (or Helle's Sea). But Phryxus at length crossed the Euxine

*And men grew glad.* Note how prominent *feasting* is in Jason.  
*He bade,* The king bade.



(or Black Sea) and reached the coast of Colchis (the Circassian coast), and thence passed up the river Phasis (modern Poti), to descend at the city of Æea, and be welcomed by Æetes the king.

Next morn, when the ram had been sacrificed to Saving Jove, its fleece was hung upon the wall of Phryxus' house. And long did Phryxus dwell at Æea in wealth and honour, till Æetes slew him in order to possess the GOLDEN FLEECE. And to this day does Æetes keep it, hanging somewhere within his golden palace )

" And thus, O Minyæ, is the story told  
Of things that happened forty years ago ;  
Nor of the Greeks has there been any one  
To set the Theban's bones within a tomb,  
Or to Æetes mete out his due doom ;  
And yet indeed, it seemeth unto me  
That many a man would go right willingly,  
And win great thanks of men, and godlike fame,  
If there should spring up some great prince of name  
To lead them ; and I pray that such an one,  
Before my head is laid beneath a stone,  
Be sent unto us by the Gods above."

Therewith he ceased ; but all the hall did move,  
As moves a grove of rustling poplar trees  
Bowed all together by the shifting breeze,  
And through the place the name of Jason ran,  
Nor 'mid the feasters was there any man  
But toward the hero's gold-seat turned his eyes.

Meanwhile in Jason's heart did thoughts arise,  
That brought the treacherous blood into his cheek,  
And he forgot his father old and weak,  
Left 'twixt the fickle people of the land  
And wily Pelias, while he clenched his hand,  
As though it held a sword, about his cup.

Then, 'mid the murmuring, Pelias stood up

*As moves, etc.* Note the two-line simile. Epic poems usually contain many much longer similes than this. Can you find any in Jason?  
*Treacherous, Tell-tale.*

And said : " O leaders of the Minyæ,  
 I hear ye name a name right dear to me—  
 My brother's son, who in the oaken wood  
 Has grown up nurtured of the Centaur good,  
 Nor in his eyes can I see any fear  
 Of fire, or water, or the cleaving sword.

" Now therefore, if ye take him for your lord  
 Across the sea, then surely ye will get  
 Both fame and wealth, nor will men soon forget  
 To praise the noble city whence ye came,  
 Passing from age to age each hero's name."  
 Then all stood up and shouted, and the king  
 While yet the hall with Jason's name did ring  
 Set in his hands a gleaming cup of gold  
 And said : " O Jason, wilt thou well behold  
 These leaders of the people who are fain  
 To go with thee and suffer many a pain  
 And deadly fear, if they may win at last  
 Undying fame when fleeting life is past ?  
 And now, if thou art willing to be first  
 Of all these men, of whom indeed the worst  
 Is like a God, pour out this gleaming wine  
 To him with whose light all the heavens shine,  
 Almighty Jove."

Then Jason poured, and said :  
 " O Jove, by thy hand may all these be led  
 To name and wealth ! and yet indeed, for me  
 What happy ending shall I ask from thee ?  
 What helpful friends ? what length of quiet years ?  
 What freedom from ill care and deadly fears ?  
 Do what thou wilt, but none the less believe  
 That all these things and more thou shouldst receive,  
 If thou wert Jason, I were Jove to-day.

" And ye who now are hot to play this play,

*If thou wert Jason, etc.* Is this boastful ? The Greeks called pride  
 "hubris," and it was the greatest fault of all, leading to punish-  
 ment, or "nemesis." If it occurs in Jason's character, take  
 note of it.

Seeking the fleece across an unknown sea,  
Bethink ye yet of death and misery,  
And dull despair, before ye arm to go  
Unto a savage king and folk none know,  
Whence it may well hap none of ye to come  
Again unto your little ones and home.

"And do thou, Pelias, ere we get us forth,  
Send heralds out, east, west, and south, and north,  
And with them cunning men of golden speech,  
Thy tale unto the Grecian folk to teach,  
That we may lack for neither strength nor wit,  
For many a brave man like a fool will sit  
Beside the council board ; and men there are  
Wise-hearted who know little feats of war :  
Nor would I be without the strength of spears,  
Or waste wise words on dull and foolish ears.

"Also we need a cunning artisan,  
Taught by the Gods, and knowing more than man,  
To build us a good ship upon this shore.  
Then, if but ten lay hold upon the oar,  
And I, the eleventh, steer them toward the east,  
To seek the hidden Fleece of that gold beast,  
I swear to Jove that only in my hand  
The Fleece shall be, when I again take land  
To see my father's hall, or the green grass  
O'er which the grey Thessalian horses pass.

"But now, O friends, forget all, till the morn  
With other thoughts and fears is duly born ! "

He ceased, and all men shouted ; and again  
They filled their cups, and many a draught did drain.  
But Pelias gazed with heedful eyes at him,  
Nor drank the wine that well-nigh touched the brim  
Of his gold cup ; and noting every word,  
Thought well that he should be a mighty lord,  
For now already like a king he spoke,  
Gazing upon the wild tumultuous folk

*Golden speech.* Note the adjectival metaphor. Find other examples as you go along.

As one who knows what troubles are to come,  
And in this world looks for no peaceful home—  
So much he dreaded what the Gods might do.

But Æson, when he first heard Pelias, knew  
What wile was stirring, and he sat afeard,  
With sinking heart, as all the tale he heard ;  
But after hearkening what his son did say,  
He deemed a God spoke through him on that day,  
And held his peace ; yet to himself he said :  
“ And if he wins all, still shall I be dead  
Ere on the shore he stands beside the Fleece,  
The greatest and most honoured man in Greece.”

But Jason, much rejoicing in his life,  
Drank and was merry, longing for the strife ;  
Though in his heart he did not fail to see  
His uncle's cunning wiles and treachery ;  
But thought, when sixty years are gone at most,  
Then will all pleasure and all pain be lost ;  
Although my name, indeed, be cast about  
From hall to temple, amid song and shout :  
So let me now be merry with the best.

Meanwhile, all men spoke hotly of the quest,  
And healths they drank to many an honoured man,  
Until the moon sank, and the stars waxed wan,  
And from the east faint yellow light outshone  
O'er the Greek sea, so many years ago.

### BOOK III

Now the next morn, when risen was the sun,  
Men 'gan to busk them for the quest begun ;

*When sixty years.* Remark the insistence on life's shortness and death's finality, favourite ideas of Morris.

*Holly.* Note the adverbial metaphor. If you find others, collect them.

*So many years ago.* Note the tone of regret and longing, and the sense again of the inevitable passing of time. Can you find other examples of this romantic suggestion ?

*Busk them,* Busy themselves.

Nor long delay made Pelias, being in fear  
 Lest aught should stay them ; so his folk did bear  
 News of these things throughout the towns of Greece,  
 Moving great men to seek the Golden Fleece.

Now was the well-skilled Argus the first man  
 Who through the gates into Iolchos passed,  
 Whose lot in fertile Egypt first was cast.

So he, being brought to Jason, said : " O king,  
 Me have the Gods sent here to do the thing  
 Ye need the most ; for truly have I seen,  
 'Twixt sleep and waking, one clad like a queen,  
 About whose head strange light shone gloriously,  
 Stand at my bed's foot, and she said to me :

' Argus, arise, when dawn is on the earth,  
 And go unto a city great of girth  
 Men call Iolchos, and there ask for one  
 Who now gets ready a great race to run  
 Upon a steed whose maker thou shalt be,  
 And whose course is the bitter trackless sea—  
 Jason, the king's son, now himself a king.'

" Therewith she told me many a crafty thing  
 About this keel that ye are now lacking,  
 Bidding me take thee for my king and lord,  
 And thee to heed my counsel as her word  
 As for this thing. So if ye would set forth  
 Before the winter takes us from the north,  
 I pray you let there be at my commands  
 Such men as are most skilful of their hands,  
 Nor spare to take lintel, roof-tree, or post  
 Of ash or pine or oak that helpeth most,

*Me have the Gods.* Note the inversion. Consider its use here and in other instances

*Sleep and waking.* Note the antithesis. This one is uncoloured : find some instances of its more emphatic use.

*One clad like a queen, Juno*

*Strange light shone gloriously.* Remark the purposed vagueness of description, to gain effect by appealing to our old associations.

Find whether this is typical of the poem.

*Trackless sea,* An expression from Homer.

*Lintel,* Horizontal beam over door or window.

From whoso in this city lacketh gold ;  
 And chiefly take the post that now doth hold  
 The second rafter in the royal hall,  
 That I may make the good ship's prow withal,  
 For soothly from Dodona doth it come,  
 Though men forget it, the grey pigeons' home.

" So look to see a marvel, and forthright  
 Set on the smiths the sounding brass to smite,  
 For surely shall all ye your armour need  
 Before these flower-buds have turned to seed."

Then Jason gave him thanks and gifts enow,  
 And through the town sought all who chanced to  
 know

The woodwright's craft, by whom was much begun,  
 Whilst he took gifts of wood from many an one,  
 And getting timber with great gifts of gold,  
 Spared not to take the great post used to hold  
 The second rafter in the royal hall  
 To make the new ship's goodly prow withal.

So Argus laboured, and the work was sped,  
 Moreover, by a man with hoary head  
 Whose dwelling and whose name no man could know,  
 Who many a strange thing of the craft did show,  
 And, 'mid their work, men gazed at him askance,  
 Half fearful of his reverend piercing glance,  
 But did his bidding ; yet knew not indeed,  
 It was the Queen of Heaven, Saturn's seed.

(Meanwhile from all the parts of Greece came heroes to  
 the town, and amongst them were black-haired Theseus,  
 one day to slay the monstrous Minotaur ; swift-running  
 Atalanta, with sandalled feet set firm upon the sand, " a  
 very maid, yet fearing not for aught " ; Mopsus, the wise,  
 who knew of things to come ; the mighty brothers,

*From Dodona.* Therefore would be able to give oracular advice in  
 case of need.

*Forthright, Straightway* (archaic).

*Enow, Enough ; sped, speeded* (archaisms).

*Saturn's seed.* Juno, daughter of Ops and Saturn.

Telamon and Peleus, whose sons were to be mightier than they, even Ajax and Achilles ; Butes, fairest of all men ; Tiphys, the skilful pilot ; the dreadful Hercules, a lion's fell hung over his shoulders, and in his hand a club of unknown wood bound round with brass ; his two squires, Hylas and Ephebus ; the twins Castor and Pollux, sons of the swan Leda ; Lynceus, the keen-eyed, who could see through the dark ; Arcas the hunter, of unmatched speed ; Zetes and Calais, sons of the Northwind, with wings sprung from anigh the head ; Asclepius, who knew all healing herbs ; Nestor the wise ; Laertes, father of Odysseus ; and many another.)

And last of all, Orpheus the singer came,  
The son of King Œager, great of fame.  
Hither he came the Minyæ to please,  
And make them masters of the threatening seas,  
Cheering their hearts, and making their hands strong  
With the unlooked-for sweetness of his song.  
Now was it eve by then that Orpheus came  
Into the hall, and when they heard his name,  
And toward the high-seat of the prince he drew,  
All men beholding him, the singer knew,  
And glad they were, indeed, that he should be  
Their mate upon the bitter, tuneless sea.  
And loud they shouted ; but Prince Jason said :  
" Now, may the Gods bring good things on thy head,  
Son of Œager, but from me, indeed,  
This gold Dædalian bowl shall be thy meed,  
If thou wilt let us hear thy voice take wing  
From out thine heart, and see the golden string  
Quiver beneath thy fingers. But by me  
First sit and feast, and happy mayst thou be."

*King Œager, Of Thrace.* Orpheus was the greatest poet of the mythological age of Greece.  
*Bitter, tuneless sea.* Take special note of the sea-epithets in the poem.  
*Dædalian.* Made by Dædalus, the clever craftsman who made wings for himself and Icarus his son to fly over the Ægean Sea. (The wings were probably ship's sails, of which he was said to be the inventor.)

Then, glad at heart, the hero took his place,  
 And ate and drank his fill, but when the space  
 Was cleared of flesh and bread, he took his lyre  
 And sung them of the building up of Tyre,  
 And of the fair things stor'd up over sea,  
 Till there was none of them but fain would be  
 Set in the ship, nor cared one man to stay  
 On the green earth for one more idle day.

But Jason, looking right and left on them,  
 Took his fair cloak, wrought with a golden hem,  
 And laid it upon Orpheus, and thereto  
 Added the promised bowl, that all men knew  
 No hand but that of Dædalus had wrought,  
 So rich it was, and fair beyond all thought.  
 Then did he say unto the Minyæ :

" Fair friends and well-loved guests, no more shall ye  
 Feast in this hall until we come again,  
 Back to this land, well-guerdoned for our pain,  
 Bearing the Fleece, and mayhap many a thing  
 Such as this godlike guest erewhile did sing,  
 Scarlet, and gold, and brass ; but without fail  
 Bearing great fame, if aught that may avail  
 To men who die ; and our names certainly  
 Shall never perish, wheresoe'er we lie.

" And now behold within the haven rides  
 Our good ship, swinging in the changing tides,  
 Gleaming with gold, and blue, and cinnabar,  
 The long new oars beside the rowlocks are,  
 The sail hangs flapping in the light west wind,  
 Nor aught undone can any craftsman find

*Lyre*, Ancient instrument like a harp but small, with strings stretched between two curved horns. It was held up in the left hand, and strummed as accompaniment to the voice.

*Tyre*, Phœnician city on an island off the Syrian coast.

*Well-guerdoned*, Rewarded well.

*Scarlet, etc.* Note the simple lists of bright things and bright colours here and in the passage, "gold, and blue, and cinnabar." Find what colours are favourites with Morris ; and form some conclusion from this.

*Cinnabar*, A vermilion pigment.



From stem to stern ; so is our quest begun  
 To-morrow at the rising of the sun.  
 And may Jove bring us all safe back to see  
 Another sun shine on this fair city,  
 When elders and the flower-crowned maidens meet  
 With tears and singing our returning feet."

So he spake, and so mighty was the shout,  
 That the hall shook, and shepherd-folk without  
 The well-walled city heard it, as they went  
 Unto the fold across the thymy bent.

## BOOK IV

BUT through the town few eyes were sealed by sleep  
 When the sun rose ; yea, and the upland sheep  
 Must guard themselves, for that one morn at least,  
 Against the wolf ; and wary doves may feast  
 Unscared that morning on the ripening corn.  
 Nor did the whetstone touch the scythe that morn ;  
 And all unheeded did the mackerel shoal  
 Make green the blue waves, or the porpoise roll  
 Through changing hills and valleys of the sea.

For 'twixt the thronging people solemnly  
 The heroes went afoot along the way  
 That led unto the haven of the bay,  
 And as they went the roses rained on them  
 From windows glorious with the well-wrought hem  
 Of many a purple cloth ; and all their spears  
 Were twined with flowers that the fair earth bears ;  
 And round their ladies' tokens were there set

*Well-walled.* Note the frequent use of compound words in this poem, and how they assist compression.

*Thymy bent,* Grass with patches of thyme.

*Sheep, doves, etc.* Notice this clever use of outside local circumstances to lend reality to the main incident. The pleasing images, too, impart their own tapestry effects. Collect further instances.

*Tokens.* An anachronism. They were favours worn by mediæval, not Greek, knights as signs of devotion to a lady.

About their helmets, flowery wreaths, still wet  
With beaded dew of the scarce vanished night.

So as they passed, the young men at the sight  
Shouted for joy, and their hearts swelled with pride ;  
But scarce the elders could behold dry-eyed  
The glorious show, remembering well the days  
When they were able too to win them praise,  
And in their hearts was hope of days to come.

But on they went, and as the way they trod,  
His swelling heart nigh made each man a god ;  
While clashed their armour to the minstrelsy  
That went before them to the doubtful sea.  
And now, the streets being passed, they reached the  
bay,

Where by the well-built quay long Argo lay,  
Glorious with gold, and shining in the sun.  
Then first they shouted, and each man begun  
Against his shield to strike his brazen spear ;  
And as along the quays they drew anear,  
Faster they strode and faster, till a cry  
Again burst from them, and right eagerly  
Into swift running did they break at last,  
Till all the wind-swept quay being overpast,  
They pressed across the gangway, and filled up  
The hollow ship as wine a golden cup.

But Jason, standing by the helmsman's side  
High on the poop, lift up his voice and cried :  
" Look landward, heroes, once, before ye slip  
The tough well-twisted hawser from the ship,  
And set your eager hands to rope or oar ;  
For now, behold, the king stands on the shore  
Beside a new-built altar, while the priests  
Lead up a hecatomb of spotless beasts,  
White bulls and coal-black horses, and my sire

*Doubtful, Treacherous.*

*Hecatomb, Great public sacrifice of a hundred animals.*

*Spotless, Of one colour all over—white beasts for the Olympian,  
black for the infernal gods.*

Lifts up the barley-cake above the fire ;  
 And in his hand a cup of ruddy gold  
 King Pelias takes ; and now may ye behold  
 The broad new-risen sun light up the God,  
 Who, holding in his hand the crystal rod  
 That rules the sea, stands by Dædalian art  
 Above his temple, set right far apart  
 From other houses, nigh the deep green sea.

" And now, O fellows, from no man but me  
 These gifts come to the God, that, ere long years  
 Have drowned our laughter and dried up our tears,  
 We may behold that glimmering brazen God  
 Against the sun bear up his crystal rod  
 Once more, and once more cast upon this land  
 This cable, severed by my bloodless brand."

So spake he, and raised up the glittering steel,  
 That fell, and seaward straight did Argo reel,  
 Set free, and smitten by the western breeze,  
 And raised herself against the ridgy seas,  
 With golden eyes turned toward the Colchian land,  
 Still heedful of wise Tiphys' skilful hand.

But silent sat the heroes by the oar,  
 Harkening the sounds borne from the lessening  
 shore ;

The lowing of the doomed and flower-crowned beasts,  
 The plaintive singing of the ancient priests,  
 Mingled with blare of trumpets, and the sound  
 Of all the many folk that stood around  
 The altar and the temple by the sea.  
 So sat they pondering much and silently,  
 Till all the landward noises died away,  
 And, midmost now of the green sunny bay,

*Barley-cake*, Meal offering, part sprinkled over the vietim, the rest over the fire.

*The God*, Neptune ; in Greek, Poseidon. There were huge bronze statues to him in many harbour-towns. The crystal rod is his trident, with which he lashes the sea into storms

*The sounds*. Remark how sensitive Morris is to sounds of all kinds, and to silence.

They heard no sound but washing of the seas  
 And piping of the following western breeze,  
 And heavy measured beating of the oars ;  
 So left the Argo the Thessalian shores.

Now Neptune, joyful of the sacrifice  
 Beside the sea, and all the gifts of price  
 That Jason gave him, set their wind at will,  
 And swiftly Argo climbed each changing hill,  
 And ran through rippling valleys of the sea ;  
 Nor toiled the heroes unmelodiously,  
 For by the mast sat great Eager's son,  
 And through the harp-strings let his fingers run  
 Nigh soundless, and with closed lips for a while ;  
 But soon across his face there came a smile,  
 And his glad voice brake into such a song  
 That swiftness sped the eager ship along.

" O bitter sea, tumultuous sea,  
 Full many an ill is wrought by thee !—

" Now, therefore, O thou bitter sea,  
 With no long words we pray to thee,  
 But ask thee, hast thou felt before  
 Such strokes of the long ashen oar ?  
 And hast thou yet seen such a prow  
 Thy rich and niggard waters plough ?

" Nor yet, O sea, shalt thou be cursed,  
 If at thy hands we gain the worst,  
 And, wrapt in water, roll about  
 Blind-eyed, unheeding song or shout,  
 Within thine eddies far from shore,  
 Warmed by no sunlight any more.

" Therefore, indeed, we joy in thee,  
 And praise thy greatness, and will we  
 Take at thy hands both good and ill,  
 Yea, what thou wilt, and praise thee still,  
 Enduring not to sit at home,  
 And wait until the last days come,

" O bitter sea." Note the change to tetrameter from the regular metre of the poem.

When we no more may care to hold  
White bosoms under crowns of gold,  
And our dulled hearts no longer are  
Stirred by the clangorous noise of war,  
And hope within our souls is dead,  
And no joy is remembered

“ So, if thou hast a mind to slay,  
Fair prize thou hast of us to-day ;  
And if thou hast a mind to save,  
Great praise and honour shalt thou have :  
But whatso thou wilt do with us,  
Our end shall not be piteous,  
Because our memories shall live  
When folk forget the way to drive  
The black keel through the heaped-up sea,  
And half dried up thy waters be.”

Then shouted all the heroes, and they drove  
The good ship forth, so that the birds above,  
With long white wings, scarce flew so fast as they.  
And so they laboured well-nigh all the day,  
And ever in their ears divine words rung,  
For midmost of them still the Thracian sung  
Stories of Gods and men ; and when the sun  
To fall adown the heavens had begun,  
They trimmed the sails, and drew the long oars up,  
And, having poured wine from a golden cup  
Unto the Gods, gladdened their hearts with food ;  
Then, having feasted as they thought it good,  
Set hands upon the oars again, and so  
Toiled on, until the broad sun, growing low,  
Reddened the green sea ; then they held their hands  
Till he should come again from unknown lands,  
And fell to meat again, and sat so long  
Over the wine-cups, cheered with tale and song,  
That night fell on them, and the moon rose high,  
And the fair western wind began to die,  
Though still they drifted slowly towards the east ;  
Then with sweet sleep the others crowned their feast,

But Tiphys and the leader of the rest,  
 Who watched till drew the round moon to the west,  
 And Jason could behold beneath her light,  
 Far off at first, a little speck of white,  
 Which, as the grey dawn stole across the sea,  
 And the wind freshened, grew at last to be  
 Grey rocks and great, and when they nigher drew  
 The skilful helmsman past all doubting knew  
 The land of Lemnos ; therefore from their sleep  
 They roused their fellows, bidding them to keep  
 The good ship from that evil rocky shore.

So each man set his hand unto the oar,  
 And, striking sail, along the coast they crept,  
 Till the sun rose, and birds no longer slept ;  
 Until a fresh land-wind began to rise.  
 Then did they set sail, and in goodly wise  
 Draw off from Lemnos, and at close of day  
 Again before them a new country lay,  
 Which when they neared, the helmsman Tiphys  
 knew

To be the Mysian land ; being come thereto,  
 They saw a grassy shore and trees enow,  
 And a sweet stream that from the land did flow :  
 Therefore they thought it good to land thereon  
 And get them water ; but the day being gone,  
 They anchored till the dawn, anigh the beach  
 Till the sea's rim the golden sun did reach.  
 But when the day dawned, most men left the ship,  
 Some hasting the glazed water-jars to dip  
 In the fresh water ; others among these  
 Who had good will beneath the murmuring trees  
 To sit awhile, forgetful of the sea.  
 And with the seafarers there landed three  
 Amongst the best ; Alcmena's godlike son,

*Lemnos*, An island in the north of the Ægean Sea.

*Mysian land*,<sup>c</sup> *Mysia*, a country in Asia Minor, bordered by the Dardanelles.

*Alcmena's godlike son*, Hercules.

Hylas the fair, and that half-halting one,  
 Great Polyphemus. Now both Hercules  
 And all the others lay beneath the trees,  
 When all the jars were filled, nor wandered far ;  
 But Hylas, governed by some wayward star,  
 Strayed from them, and up stream he set his face,  
 And came into a tangled woody place,  
 From whence the stream came, and within that wood  
 Along its bank wandered in heedless mood,  
 Nor knew it haunted of the sea-nymphs fair ;  
 Whom on that morn the heroes' noise did scare  
 From their abiding-place anigh the bay ;  
 But these now hidden in the water lay  
 Within the wood, and thence could they behold  
 The fair-limbed Hylas, with his hair of gold,  
 And mighty arms down-swinging carelessly,  
 And fresh face, ruddy from the wind-swept sea ;  
 Then straight they loved him, and being fain to have  
 His shapely body in the glassy wave,  
 And taking counsel there, they thought it good  
 That one should meet him in the darksome wood,  
 And by her wiles should draw him to some place  
 Where they his helpless body might embrace.

. . . . .  
 Meanwhile the ship being watered, and the day  
 Now growing late, the prince would fain away ;  
 So from the ship was blown a horn to call  
 The stragglers back, who mustered one and all,  
 But Theban Hylas ; therefore, when they knew  
 That he was missing, Hercules withdrew  
 From out the throng, if yet perchance his voice  
 Hylas might hear, and all their hearts rejoice  
 With his well-known shout in reply thereto ;  
 With him must Polyphemus likewise go,

*Hylas*, A beautiful youth, attendant upon Hercules.  
*Polyphemus*, Not the one-eyed monster, but the brother-in-law of  
 Hercules. He was killed in Mysia.

To work out the wise counsel of the Fates :  
 Unhappy ! who no more would see the gates  
 Of white-walled fair Larissa, or the plain  
 Burdened by many an overladen wain.

For while their cries and shouts ran through the wood,  
 The others reached the ship, and thought it good  
 To weigh the anchor, and anigh the shore,  
 With loosened sail, and run-out ready oar,  
 To trim the ship for leaving the fair bay ;  
 And therefore, Juno, waiting for that day,  
 And for that hour, had gathered store of wind  
 Up to the hills to work out all her mind,  
 Which, from the Mysian mountains now let slip,  
 Tearing along the low shore, smote the ship  
 In blinding clouds of salt spray mixed with rain.

Then vainly they struck sail, and all in vain  
 The rowers strove to keep her head to wind,  
 And still they drifted seaward, drenched and blind.

But, 'mid their struggling, suddenly there shone  
 A light from Argo's high prow, and thereon  
 Could their astonished fearful eyes behold  
 A figure standing, with wide wings of gold,  
 Upright, amid the weltering of the sea,  
 Calm 'midst the noise and cries, and presently  
 To all their ears a voice pierced, saying : " No more,  
 O Jove-blessed heroes, strive to reach the shore,  
 Nor seek your lost companions ; for of these  
 Jove gives you not the mighty Hercules  
 To help you forward on your happy way,  
 But wills him in the Greek land still to stay ;  
 Where many a thing he has for him to do,  
 With whom awhile shall Polyphemus go,  
 Then build in Mysia a fair merchant-town,

*Unhappy !* An example of apostrophe.

*Larissa*, An important town on the Peneus, in Thessaly.

*Argo's high prow*, Made of wood from Dodona, and so oracular.

*Weltering*, Rolling.

*A fair merchant-town*, Cius, on the Propontis.



And when long years have passed, there lay him down:  
 And as for Hylas, never think to see  
 His body more, who yet lies happily  
 Beneath the green stream where ye were this morn,  
 And there he praises Jove that he was born,  
 Forgetting the rough world, and every care ;  
 Not dead, nor living, among faces fair,  
 White limbs, and wonders of the watery world.

" And now I bid ye spread the sail ye furled,  
 And make on towards the straits while Juno sends  
 Fair wind behind you, calling you her friends."  
 Therewith the voice ceased, and the storm was still,  
 And afterward they had good wind at will,  
 To help them toward the straits, but all the rest,  
 Rejoicing at the speeding of their quest,  
 Yet wondered much whence that strange figure came,  
 That on the prow burnt like a harmless flame ;  
 Yea, some must go and touch the empty space  
 From whence those words flew from the godlike face ;  
 But Jason and the builder, Argus, knew  
 Whereby the prow foretold things strange and new,  
 Nor wondered aught, but thanked the Gods therefore,  
 As far astern they left the Mysian shore.

## BOOK V

Now, driven by the oar, and feeling well  
 The wind that made the fair white sail outswell,  
 Thessalian Argo flew on toward the place  
 Where first the rude folks saw dead Helle's face :  
 There, fearful of the darkness of the night,  
 Without the rocks they anchored till the light,  
 And when the day broke, sped them through the  
 straits

*White limbs, etc* Is the alliteration here overdone ?  
*From whence, etc* Is this a good line ? What is the modern form ?  
*The place where first, etc.* The Hellespont (modern Dardanelles).

With oars alone, and through the narrow gates  
 Came out into Propontis, where with oar  
 And sail together, within sight of shore,  
 They went, until the sun was falling down,  
 And then they saw the white walls of a town,  
 And made thereto, and being come anigh,  
 They found that on an isle the place did lie,  
 And Tiphys called it Cyzicum, a place  
 Built by a goodly man of a great race,  
 Himself called Cyzicus, Euzorus' son,  
 Who still in peace ruled over many an one,  
 Merchants and other, in that city fair.

Therefore, they thought it good to enter there.

(King Cyzicus made them gifts, and they departed from him; but, driven blindly by a storm, Argo at night stood to within a shallow bay on a coast unknown. Assailed at break of day by an armed force, they withstood it, and Jason slew the enemy leader. Alas! in broad daylight the slain man proved none other than King Cyzicus. Both sides had erred. After solemn funeral rites, the Argonauts drew off from that unlucky shore.)

Now eastward with a fair wind as they went,  
 And towards the opening of the ill sea bent  
 Their daring course, Tiphys arose and said:

"Heroes, it seems to me that hardihead  
 Helps mortal men but little, if thereto  
 They join not wisdom; now needs must we go  
 Into the evil sea through blue rocks twain,  
 No keel hath ever passed, although in vain  
 Some rash men trying it of old have been  
 Pounded therein, as poisonous herbs and green  
 Are pounded by some witch-wife on the shore  
 Of Pontus—for these two rocks evermore  
 Each against each are driven, and leave not

*Propontis*, Sea of Marmora.

*Cyzicum*, On the south shore of the Propontis.

*Evil sea*, Black Sea, or Euxine, or Pontus. At the entrance stood the fabled Symplegades, or clashing rock-islets.

Across the whole strait such a little spot  
Safe from the grinding of their mighty blows,  
As that through which a well-aimed arrow goes  
When archers for a match shoot at the ring.

"Now, heroes, do I mind me of a king  
That dwelleth at a seaside town of Thrace  
That men call Salmydessa, from this place  
A short day's sail, who hidden things can tell  
Beyond all men; wherefore, I think it well  
That we for counsel should now turn thereto,  
Nor headlong to our own destruction go."

Then all men said that these his words were good,  
And turning, towards the Thracian coast they stood,  
Which yet they reached not till the moonlit night  
Was come, and from the shore the wind blew light;  
Then they lay to until the dawn, and then  
Creeping along, found an abode of men  
That Tiphys knew to be the place they sought.  
Thereat they shouted, and right quickly brought  
Fair Argo to the landing-place, and threw  
Grapnels ashore, and landing forthwith drew  
Unto the town, seeking Phineus the king.  
But those they met and asked about this thing  
Grew pale at naming him, and few words said;  
Nathless, they being unto the palace led,  
And their names told, soon were they bidden in  
To where the king sat, a man blind and thin,  
And haggard beyond measure, who straightway  
Called out aloud: "Now blessed be the way  
That led thee to me, happiest of all  
Who from the poop see the prow rise and fall  
And the sail bellying, and the glittering oars;  
And blessed be the day whereon our shores

*Salmydessa*, A town on the western shore of the Black Sea Morris is astray here in his geography; for to reach *Salmydessa* the Argonauts would have had to pass the *Symplegades*—he must have thought *Salmydessa* was in an arm of the Propontis.  
*Nathless*, Nevertheless.

First felt thy footsteps, since across the sea  
My hope and my revenge thou bring'st with thee."

Then Jason said : " Hail, Phineus, that men call  
Wisest of men, and may all good befall  
To thee and thine, and happy mayst thou live ;  
Yet do we rather pray thee gifts to give,  
Than bring thee any gifts, for, soothly, we  
Sail, desperate men and poor, across the sea."

Then answered Phineus : " Guest, I know indeed  
What gift it is that on this day ye need,  
Which I will not withhold ; and yet, I pray,  
That ye will eat and drink with me to-day,  
Then shall ye see how wise a man am I,  
And how well-skilled to 'scape from misery."

Therewith he groaned, and bade his folk to bring  
Such feast as 'longed unto a mighty king,  
And spread the board therewith ; who straight  
obeyed,

Trembling and pale, and on the tables laid  
A royal feast most glorious in show.

Then said the king : " I give you now to know  
That the Gods love me not, O guests ; therefore,  
Lest your expected feast be troubled sore,  
Feast by yourselves alone while I sit here  
Looking for that which scarcely brings me fear  
This day, since I so long have suffered it."

So, wondering at his words, they all did sit  
At that rich board, and ate and drank their fill ;  
But yet with little mirth indeed, for still  
Within their ears the king's words harshly rang,  
And his blind eyes, made restless by some pang,  
They still felt on them, though no word he said.

At last he called out : " Though ye be full fed,  
Sit still at table and behold me eat,  
Then ye shall witness with what royal meat  
The Gods are pleased to feed me, since I know

As much as they do both of things below  
And things above."

Then, hearkening to this word,  
The most of them grew doubtful and afraid  
Of what should come ; but now unto the board  
The king was led, and nigh his hand his sword,  
Two-edged and ivory-hilted, did they lay,  
And set the richest dish of all that day  
Before him, and a wine-crowned golden cup,  
And a pale, trembling servant lifted up  
The cover from the dish ; then did they hear  
A wondrous rattling sound that drew anear,  
Increasing quickly : then the gilded hall  
Grew dark at noon, as though the night did fall,  
And open were all doors and windows burst,  
And such dim light gleamed out as lights the cursed  
Unto the torments behind Minos' throne :  
Dim, green, and doubtful through the hall it shone,  
Lighting up shapes no man had seen, before  
They fell, awhile ago, upon that shore.

For now, indeed, the trembling Minyæ  
Beheld the daughters of the earth and sea,  
The dreadful Snatchers, who like women were  
Down to the breast, with scanty coarse black hair  
About their heads, and dim eyes ringed with red,  
And bestial mouths set round with lips of lead,  
But from their gnarled necks there began to spring  
Half hair, half feathers, and a sweeping wing  
Grew out instead of arm on either side,  
And thick plumes underneath the breast did hide  
The place where joined the fearful natures twain.  
Grey feathered were they else, with many a stain  
Of blood thereon, and on birds' claws they went.

These through the hall unheard-of shrieking sent,  
And rushed at Phineus, just as to his mouth  
He raised the golden cup to quench his drouth,

*Minos, A judge in the infernal regions.  
Snatchers, The Harpies*

And scattered the red wine, and buffeted  
 The wretched king, and one, perched on his head,  
 Laughed as the Furies laugh, when kings come down  
 To lead new lives within the fiery town,  
 And said : " O Phineus, thou art lucky now  
 The hidden things of heaven and hell to know  
 Eat, happy man, and drink." Then did she draw  
 From off the dish a gobbet with her claw,  
 And held it nigh his mouth, the while he strove  
 To free his arm, that one hovering above,  
 Within her filthy vulture-claws clutched tight,  
 And cried out at him : " Truly, in dark night  
 Thou seest, Phineus, as the leopard doth."

Then cried the third : " Fool, who would fain have  
 both

Delight and knowledge ! therefore, with blind eyes  
 Clothe thee in purple, wrought with braverics,  
 And set the pink-veined marble 'neath thy throne ;  
 Then on its golden cushions sit alone,  
 Harkening thy chain-galled slaves without singing  
 For joy, that they behold so many a thing."

Then shrieked the first one in a dreadful voice :  
 " And I, O Phineus, bid thee to rejoice,  
 That 'midst thy knowledge still thou know'st not this,  
 Whose flesh the lips, wherewith thy lips I kiss,  
 This morn have fed on." Then she laughed again,  
 And fawning on him, with her sisters twain  
 Spread her wide wings, and hid him from the sight,  
 And mixed his groans with screams of shrill delight.

Now trembling sat the seafarers, nor dared  
 To use the weapons from their sheaths half-bared,  
 Fearing the Gods, who there before their eyes  
 Had shown them with what shame and miseries

*Furies*, The avenging deities, three hideous winged maidens, who pursued their prey to ruin.

*O Phineus, etc.* The speech is ironical. Notice other examples.

*Gobbet*, A lump of flesh.

*Fool, who would fain.* The speech is sarcastic. Note how it differs from the first two.

They visit impious men : yet from the board  
 There started two with shield and ready sword,  
 The Northwind's offspring, since, upon that day  
 Their father wrought within them in such way  
 They had no fear : but now, when Phineus knew,  
 By his divine art, that the godlike two  
 Were armed to help him, then from 'twixt the wings  
 He cried aloud : " O heroes, more than kings,  
 Strike, and fear not, but set me free to-day,  
 That ye within your brazen chests may lay  
 The best of all my treasure-house doth hold,  
 Fair linen, scarlet cloth, and well-wrought gold ! "

Then shrieked the Snatchers, knowing certainly  
 That now the time had come when they must fly  
 From pleasant Salmydessa, casting off  
 The joys they had in shameful mock and scoff.  
 So gat they from the blind king, leaving him  
 Pale and forewearied in his every limb ,  
 And, flying through the roof, they set them down  
 Above the hall-doors, 'mid the timbers brown,  
 Chattering with fury. Then the fair-dyed wings  
 Opened upon the shoulders of the kings,  
 And on their heels, and shouting they uprose,  
 And poised themselves in air to meet their foes.

Then here and there those loathly things did fly  
 Before the brazen shields, and swords raised high,  
 But as they flew unlucky words they cried.

The first said : " Hail, O folk who wander wide,  
 Seeking a foolish thing across the sea,  
 Not heeding in what case your houses be,  
 Where now perchance the rovers cast the brand  
 Up to the roof, and leading by the hand  
 The fair-limbed women with their fettered feet  
 Pass down the sands, their hollow ship to meet. "

*Impious men.* Phineus had been blinded by Jove for revealing to  
 men his knowledge of the future  
*Northwind's offspring,* Zetes and Calais, two of the Argonauts.  
*Forewearied,* Very wearied, tired out.  
*Hail, O folk.* This speech is mere bluff

"Fair hap to him who weds the sorceress,"  
The second cried, "and may the just Gods bless  
The slayer of his kindred and his name."

"Luck to the toilsome seeker after fame,"  
The third one from the open hall-door cried,  
"Fare ye well, Jason, still unsatisfied,  
Still seeking for a better thing than best,  
A fairer thing than fairest, without rest ;  
Good speed, O traitor, who shall think to wed  
Soft limbs and white, and find thy royal bed  
Dripping with blood, and burning up with fire ;  
Good hap to him who henceforth ne'er shall tire  
In seeking good that ever flies his hand  
Till he lies buried in an alien land !"

So screamed the monstrous fowl, but now the twain  
Sprung from the Northwind's loins to be their bane,  
Drew nigh unto them ; then, with huddled wings  
Forth from the hall they gat, but evil things  
In flying they gave forth with weakened voice,  
Saying unto them : "O ye men, rejoice,  
Whose bodies worms shall feed on soon or late,  
Blind slaves, and foolish of unsparing fate,  
Seeking for that which ye can never get,  
Whilst life and death alike ye do forget  
In needless strife, until on some sure day,  
Death takes your scarcely tasted life away."

Quivering their voices ceased as on they flew  
Before the swift wings of the godlike two  
Far over land and sea, until they were  
Anigh the isles called Strophades, and there,

*Fair hap to him, To Jason.*

*Still seeking, etc.* This couplet in some sort explains the whole poem, and gives the poet's conception of a hero.

*Quivering, etc.* Notice the length of this sentence. Remark other very long or very short ones.

*Strophades*, Two islets off the western coast of the Peloponnesus. The name signifies a turning-point, because the two Argonauts turned back there.



With tirèd wings all voiceless did they light,  
Trembling to see anigh the armour bright  
The wind-born brothers bore, but as these drew  
Their gleaming swords and to the monsters flew,  
From out the deep rose up a black-haired man,  
Who, standing on the white-topped waves that ran  
On towards the shore, cried : " Heroes, turn again,  
For on this islet shall ye land in vain ;  
But without sorrow leave the chase of these  
Who henceforth 'mid the rocky Strophades  
Shall dwell for ever, servants unto me,  
Working my will ; therefore rejoice that ye  
Win gifts and honour for your deed to-day."

Then, even as he spoke, they saw but grey  
White-headed waves rolling where he had stood,  
Whereat they sheathed their swords, and through  
their blood

A tremor ran, for now they knew that he  
Was Neptune, shaker of the earth and sea ,  
Therefore they turned them back unto the hall  
Where yet the others were, and ere nightfall  
Came back to Salmydessa and the king,  
And lighting down they told him of the thing.

Who, hearing them, straight lifted up his voice,  
And 'midst the shouts cried : " Heroes, now rejoice  
With me who am delivered on this day  
From that which took all hope and joy away ;  
Therefore to feast again, until the sun  
Another glad day for us has begun,  
And then, indeed, if ye must try the sea,  
With gifts and counsel shall ye go from me,  
Such as the Gods have given me to give,  
And happy lives and glorious may ye live."

Then did they fall to banqueting again,  
Forgetting all forebodings and all pain.

## BOOK VI

BUT on the morrow did they get them gone,  
Gifted with gold and many a precious stone,  
And many a bale of scarlet cloth and spice,  
And arms well wrought, and goodly robes of price.  
But chiefly to the wind-born brothers strong  
Did gifts past telling on that morn belong.

Now as they stood upon the windy quay,  
Ready their hands upon the ropes to lay,  
Phineus, who 'midst his mighty lords was there,  
Set high above them in a royal chair,  
Said : " Many a gift ye have of me to-day  
Within your treasuries at home to lay,  
If so it be that through hard things and pain  
Ye come to the horse-nurturing land again ;  
Natheless, one more gift shall ye have of me,  
For lacking that, beneath the greedy sea,  
The mighty tomb of mariners and kings,  
Doubt not to lay down these desired things,  
Nor think to come to Thessaly at all."  
And therewith turning, he began to call  
Unto his folk to bring what they had there.  
Then one brought forward a cage great and fair,  
Wherein they saw a grey pink-footed dove.

Then said the king : " The very Gods above  
Can scanty help you more than now I do :  
For listen ; as upon this day ye go  
Unto the narrow ending of the sea,  
Anigh the clashing rocks lie patiently,  
And let the keenest-eyed among you stand  
Upon the prow, and let loose from his hand  
This dove, who from my mouth to-day has heard  
So many a mystic and compelling word,

*Horse-nurturing land, Thessaly.*

He cannot choose, being loosed, but fly down straight  
Unto the opening of that dreadful gate ;  
So let the keen-eyed watch, and if so be  
He come out safe into the Evil Sea,  
Then bend unto the oars, nor fear at all  
Of aught that from the Clashers may befall ;  
But if he perish, then turn back again,  
And know the Gods have made your passage vain.

" O king," said Jason, " know that on this day  
I will not be forsworn, but by some way  
Will reach the oak-grove and the Golden Fleece,  
Or, failing, die at least far off from Greece,  
Not unremembered ; yet great thanks we give  
For this thy gift and counsel, and will strive  
To come to Colchis through the unknown land ;  
And whatso perils wait us, if Jove's hand  
Be heavy on us, and the great blue gates  
Are shut against us by the unmoved fates,  
Farewell, O king, and henceforth, free from ill,  
Live happy as thou mayst, and honoured still "

Then turned he shouting to the Minyæ,  
Who o'er the gangways rushed tumultuously,  
And from the land great Argo straightway thrust,  
And gat them to their work, hot with the lust  
Of fame and noble deeds and happy prize.  
But the bird Lynceus took, unto whose eyes  
The night was as the day, and fire as air.

Then back into his marble palace fair  
The king turned, thinking well upon the way  
Of what had happed since morn of yesterday.

Now from the port passed Argo, and the wind  
Being fair for sailing, quickly left behind  
Fair Salmydessa, the kind gainful place ;  
And so, with sail and oar, in no long space  
They reached the narrow ending of the sea,

Where the wind shifted, blowing gustily  
 From side to side, so that their flapping sail  
 But little in the turmoil could avail ;  
 And now at last did they begin to hear  
 The pounding of the rocks ; but nothing clear  
 They saw them ; for the steaming clouds of spray,  
 Cast by the meeting hammers every way,  
 Quite hid the polished bases from their sight ;  
 Unless perchance the eyes of Lynceus might  
 Just now and then behold the deep blue shine  
 Betwixt the scattering of the silver brine ;  
 But sometimes 'twixt the clouds the sun would pass  
 And show the high rocks glittering like glass,  
 Quivering, as far beneath the churned-up waves  
 Were ground together the strong arched caves,  
 Wherein none dwelt, no, not the giant's brood,  
 Who fed the green sea with his lustful blood ;  
 Nor were sea-devils even nurtured there ;  
 Nor dared the sea-worm use them for its lair.

And now the Minyæ, as they drew anear,  
 Had been at point to turn about for fear,  
 Each man beholding his pale fellow's face,  
 Whose speech was silenced in that dreadful place  
 By the increasing clamour of the sea  
 And adamantine rocks ; then verily  
 Was Juno good at heed, who set strange fire  
 In Jason's heart, and measureless desire  
 To be the first of men, and made his voice  
 Clear as that herald's, whose sweet words rejoice  
 The Gods within the flowery fields of heaven,  
 And gave his well-knit arm the strength of seven.  
 So then, above the crash and thundering,

*Betwixt the scattering, etc.* Notice how thin vowels are used to gain a silvery effect : also in "glittering like glass." Contrast, above, "The pounding of the rocks."

*Giant's brood*, The giants sprung from the drops of the blood of Uranus when he was dethroned by his sons.

*Sea-worm*, Sea-serpent.

*That herald's*, Hermes. *Adamantine*, Steely-hard.

The Minyæ heard his shrill calm voice, crying :  
" Shall this be then an ending to our quest ?  
And shall we find the worst, who sought the best ?  
Far better had ye sat beside your wives,  
And 'mid the wine-cups lingered out your lives,  
Dreaming of noble deeds, though trying none,  
Than as vain boasters with your deed undone,  
Come back to Greece, that men may sing of you.  
Are ye all shameless then ? Ho ! Lynceus ! stand  
Upon the prow, and let slip from your hand  
The wise king's bird ; and all ye note, the wind  
Is steady now, and blowing from behind  
Drives us on toward the Clashers, and I hold  
The helm myself ; therefore, lest we be rolled  
Broadside against these horrors, take the oar,  
And hang here, half a furlong from the shore,  
Nor die of fear, until at least we know  
If through these gates the Gods will let us go :  
And if so be they will not, yet will we  
Not empty-handed come to Thessaly,  
But strike for Æa through this unknown land,  
Whose arms reach out to us on either hand."

Then they for shame began to cast off fear,  
And, handling well the oars, kept Argo near  
The changing little-lighted spray-washed space,  
Whereunto Lynceus set his eager face,  
And loosed the dove, who down the west wind flew ;  
Then all the others lost her dashing through  
The clouds of spray, but Lynceus noted how  
She reached the open space, just as a blow  
Had spent itself, and still the hollow sound  
Of the last clash was booming all around ;  
And eagerly he noted how the dove  
Stopped 'mazed, and hovered for a while above

*Æa*, An island on the river Phasis, which enters the east side of the Black Sea. Jason suggests as a last resort an overland journey to it.

The troubled sea, then stooping, darted through,  
As the blue gleaming rocks together drew ;  
Then scarce he breathed, until a joyous shout  
He gave, as he beheld her passing out  
Unscathed, above the surface of the sea,  
While back again the rocks drew sluggishly.

Then back their poised oars whirled, and straight  
they drave  
Unto the opening of the spray-arched cave ;  
But Jason's eyes alone of all the crew  
Beheld the sunny sea and cloudless blue,  
Still narrowing, but bright from rock to rock.

Now as they neared, came the next thundering  
shock

That deafened all, and with an icy cloud  
Hid man from man ; but Jason, shouting loud,  
Still clutched the tiller ; and the oars, grasped tight  
By mighty hands, drave on the ship forthright  
Unto the rocks, until with blinded eyes  
They blinked one moment at those mysteries  
Unseen before, the next they felt the sun  
Full on their backs, and knew their deed was done.

Then on their oars they lay, and Jason turned,  
And o'er the rocks beheld how Iris burned  
In fair and harmless many-coloured flame,  
And he beheld the way by which they came  
Wide open, changeless, of its spray-clouds cleared :  
And though in his bewildered ears he heard  
The tumult yet, that all was stilled he knew,  
While in and out the unused sea-fowl flew  
Betwixt them, and the now subsiding sea  
Lapped round about their dark feet quietly.

So, turning to the Minyæ, he cried :  
“ See ye, O fellows, the gates opened wide,  
And chained fast by the Gods, nor think to miss  
The very end we seek, or well-earned bliss.”

*Iris*, Goddess of the rainbow, and so messenger of the gods.  
*Unused*, Unaccustomed.

Who rose rejoicing, and poured many a cup  
Of red wine to the Gods, and hoisting up  
The weather-beaten sail, with mirth and song,  
Having good wind at will, then sped along.

Three days with good hap and fair wind they went,  
That ever at their backs Queen Juno sent,  
But on the fourth day, about noon, they drew  
Unto a new-built city no man knew ;

No, not the pilot ; so they thought it good  
To arm themselves, and thus in doubtful mood  
Brought Argo to the port, and being come nigh,  
A clear-voiced herald from the land did cry :

" Whoso ye be, if that ye come in peace,  
King Lycus bids you hail, but if from Greece  
Ye come, and are the folk of whom we hear  
Who make for Colchis free from any fear,  
Then doubly welcome are ye ; here take land,  
For everything shall be at your command."

So without fear they landed at that word,  
And told him who they were, which when he heard,  
Through the fair streets he brought them to the king,  
Who feasted them that night with everything  
That man could wish ; but when on the next day  
They gathered at the port to go away,  
The wind was foul and boisterous, so perforce  
There must they bide, lest they should come to worse.

(There abode they fourteen days, in which time Idmon  
the seer was slain by a wild boar, and the helmsman  
Tiphys died of a snake-bite. The latter's place Erginus  
took, the son of Neptune.)

Now leaving that fair land, nought they beheld  
For seven days but sea and changeful sky,  
But on the eighth day could Lynceus espy  
A land far off, and nigher as they drew

*A new-built city, Probably Heraclea Pontica, in Bithynia.*  
(2,868)

A low green shore, backed up by mountains blue,  
Cleft here and there, all saw, 'twixt hope and fear,  
For now it seemed to them they should be near  
The wished-for goal of *Ææa*, and the place  
Where in the great sea *Phasis* ends his race.

So, creeping carefully along the beach  
The mouth of a green river did they reach,  
Cleaving the sands, and on the yellow bar  
The salt waves and the fresh waves were at war,  
As *Phryxus* erst beheld them, but no man  
Among them e'er had sailed that water wan,  
Now that wise *Tiphys* lay within his tomb.

Natheless they, wrapt in that resistless doom  
The Fates had woven, turned from off the sea  
*Argo's* fair head, and rowing mightily  
Drove her across the bar, who with straight keel  
The eddying stream against her bows did feel.

So, with the wind behind them, and the oars  
Still hard at work, they went betwixt the shores  
Against the ebb, and now full oft espied  
Trim homesteads here and there on either side,  
And at the least knew that some town was nigh,  
And thought to hear new tidings presently :  
Which happed indeed, for on the turn of tide,  
At ending of a long reach, they espied  
A city wondrous fair, which seemed indeed  
To bar the river's course ; but, taking heed  
And drawing nigher, soon found out the case,  
That on an island builded was the place  
The more part of it ; but four bridges fair  
Set thick with goodly houses everywhere,  
Crossed two and two on each side to the land,  
Whereon was built, with walls on either hand,  
A towered outwork, lest that war should fall  
Upon the land, and midmost of each wall  
A noble gate ; moreover did they note

*Resistless doom.* Notice the fatalism of the Greek outlook on life.  
*Reach*, A stretch of river between two bends.



About the wharves full many a ship and boat.  
And they beheld the sunlight glistening  
On arms of men and many a warlike thing,  
As nigher to the city they were borne,  
And heard at last some huge deep booming horn  
Sound from a tower o'er the watery way,  
Whose last loud note was taken up straightway  
By many another farther and more near.

Now when they did therewith loud shouting hear,  
Then Jason bade them arm for what might come,  
"For now," quoth he, "I deem we reach the home  
Of that great marvel we are sworn to seek,  
Nor do I think to find these folk so weak  
That they with few words and a gift or two  
Will give us that for which they did forgo  
Fair fame, the love of Gods, and praise of men ;  
Be strong and play the man, I bid you then,  
For certes in none other wise shall ye  
Come back again to grassy Thessaly."

Then loud they shouted, clean forgetting fear,  
And strong Erginus Argo straight did steer  
On to the port ; but through the crowded waist  
Ran Jason to the high prow, making haste  
To be the first to look upon that throng.  
Shieldless he was, although his fingers strong  
About a sharpened brass-bound spear did meet,  
And as the ashen oars swept on, his feet  
Moved lightly to their cadence under him ;  
So stood he like a God in face and limb.

Now drawing quickly nigh the landing-place,  
Little by little did they slack their pace,  
Till half a bowshot from the shore they lay.  
Then Jason shouted : "What do ye to-day  
All armed, O warriors ? and what town is this  
That here by seeming ye have little bliss  
Of quiet life, but, smothered up in steel,

*Certes, Certainly.*

Ye needs must meet each harmless merchant keel  
 That nears your haven, though perchance it bring  
 Good news, and many a much-desired thing  
 That ye may get good cheap? and such are we,  
 But wayfarers upon the troublous sea,  
 Careful of that stored up within our hold,  
 Phœnician scarlet, spice, and Indian gold,  
 Deep-dyeing earths, and woad and cinnabar,  
 Wrought arms and vessels, and all things that are  
 Desired much by dwellers in all lands;  
 Nor doubt us friends, although indeed our hands  
 Lack not for weapons, for the unfenced head,  
 Where we have been, soon lies among the dead."

So spake he with a smiling face, nor lied;  
 For he, indeed, was purposed to have tried  
 To win the Fleece neither by war or stealth;  
 But by an open hand and heaps of wealth,  
 If so it might be, bear it back again,  
 Nor with a handful fight a host in vain.  
 But being now silent, at the last he saw  
 A stir among those folk, who 'gan to draw  
 Apart to right and left, leaving a man  
 Alone amidst them, unarmed, with a wan  
 And withered face, and black beard mixed with  
 grey

That swept his girdle, who these words did say:

"O seafarers, I give you now to know  
 That on this town oft falleth many a foe,  
 Therefore not lightly may folk take the land  
 With helm on head, and naked steel in hand;  
 Now, since indeed ye folk are but a few,  
 We fear you not, yet fain would that we knew  
 Your names and countries, since within this town  
 Of Æa may a good man lay him down

*Good cheap*, At a good bargain.

*Woad*, A plant yielding a blue dye.

*Neither by war or stealth*, Should strictly be "by neither . . . nor,"  
 in order to have corresponding correlative conjunctions.

And fear for nought, at least while I am king,  
 Æetes, born to heed full many a thing."

Now Jason, hearing this desired name  
 He thought to hear, grown hungrier for fame,  
 With eager heart, and fair face flushed for pride,  
 Said: "King Æetes, if not over wide  
 My name is known, that yet may come to be,  
 For I am Jason of the Minyæ,  
 And through great perils have I come from Greece.  
 And now, since this is Æa, and the Fleece  
 Thou slayedst once a guest to get, hangs up  
 Within thine house, take many a golden cup,  
 And arms, and dyestuffs, cloth, and spice, and gold,  
 Yea, all the goods that lie within our hold;  
 Which are not mean, for neither have we come  
 Leaving all things of price shut up at home,  
 Nor have we seen the faces of great kings  
 And left them giftless; therefore take these things  
 And be our friend; or, few folk as we are,  
 The Gods and we may bring thee bitter care."

Then spake Æetes: "Not for any word,  
 Or for the glitter of thy bloodless sword,  
 O youngling, will I give the Fleece to thee,  
 Nor yet for gifts,—for what are such to me?  
 Behold, if all thy folk joined hand to hand  
 They should not, striving, be enough to stand  
 And girdle round my bursting treasure-house;  
 Yet, since of this thing thou art amorous,  
 And I love men, and hold the Gods in fear,  
 If thou and thine will land, then mayst thou hear  
 What great things thou must do to win the Fleece;  
 Then, if thou wilt not dare it, go in peace.  
 But come now, thou shalt hear it amidst wine  
 And lovely things, and songs well-nigh divine,  
 And all the feasts that thou hast shared erewhile  
 With other kings, to mine shall be but vile,

*Born to heed full many a thing.* Notice this stock phrase or cliché,  
 used for general purposes. It is purposely vague.

Lest thou shouldst name me, coming to thy land,  
A poor guest-fearing man, of niggard hand."

So spake he outwardly, but inly thought,  
" Within two days this lading shall be brought  
To lie amongst my treasures with the best,  
While 'neath the earth these robbers lie at rest."

But Jason said : " King, if these things be such  
As man may do, I shall not fear them much,  
And at thy board will I feast merrily  
To-night, if on the morrow I must die ;  
And yet, beware of treason, since for nought  
Such lives as ours by none are lightly bought.

" Draw on, O heroes, to the shore, if ye  
Are willing still this great king's house to see."

Thereat was Argo brought up to the shore,  
And straight all landed from her, less and more,  
And the king spake to Jason honied words,  
And idle were all spears, and sheathed all swords,  
As toward the palace they were gently brought.  
But Jason, smiling outwardly, yet thought  
Within his heart : " All this is fair enow,  
Yet do I think it but an empty show ;  
Natheless, until the end comes, will not I,  
Like a bad player, spoil the bravery  
By breaking out before they call my turn :  
And then of me some mastery they may learn."

Amidst these thoughts, between the fair streets led,  
He noted well the size and goodly-head  
Of all the houses ; and the folk well clad,  
And armed as though good store of wealth they had,  
Peering upon them with a wondering gaze.  
At last a temple, built in ancient days  
Ere Æa was a town, they came unto ;  
Huge was it, but not fair unto the view  
Of one beholding from without, but round

*Lading, Cargo.*

*Temple, Of Apollo.*

*Mastery, Masterly skill.*

Laurel was sacred to him.

The ancient place they saw a spot of ground  
Where laurels grew each side the temple door,  
And two great images set up before.

Now over against this temple, towering high  
Above all houses, rose majestically  
Æetes' marble house ; silent it stood,  
Brushed round by doves, though many a stream of  
blood

Had trickled o'er its stones since it was built,  
But now, unconscious of all woe and guilt,  
It drank the sunlight that fair afternoon.

Then spake Æetes : " Stranger, thou shalt soon  
Hear all thou wouldst hear in my house of gold ;  
Yet ere thou enterest the door, behold  
That ancient temple of the Far Darter,  
And know that thy desire hangeth there,  
Against the gold wall of the inmost shrine,  
Guarded by seven locks, whose keys are thine  
When thou hast done what else thou hast to do,  
And thou mayst well be bold to come thereto "

" King," said the prince, " fear not, but do thy part,  
Nor look to see me turn back faint of heart.  
And here I think to see full many a thing  
Men love ; so, whatso the next day may bring,  
Right merrily shall pass these coming hours  
Amidst fair things and wine-cups crowned with  
flowers."

" Enter, O guests," the king said, " and doubt not  
Ye shall see things to make the heart grow hot  
With joy and longing." . . .  
And straight the king took Jason by the hand,  
And entered, and the Minyæ did stand

*Two great images, One of Diana, goddess of the moon, the other of  
Apollo, the sun-god  
Brushed round* Notice the metaphor, and its effectiveness  
*The Far Darter, Apollo.* As the god who punishes, he is represented  
with bow and arrows.  
*Seven,* A mystic number.

In such a hall as there has never been  
Before or afterwards, since Ops was queen.

The pillars, made the mighty roof to hold,  
The one was silver and the next was gold  
All down the hall ; the roof, of some strange wood  
Brought over sea, was dyed as red as blood,  
Set thick with silver flowers, and delight  
Of intertwining figures wrought aright.  
With richest webs the marble halls were hung,  
Picturing sweet stories by the poets sung  
From ancient days, so that no wall seemed there,  
But rather forests black and meadows fair,  
And streets of well-built towns, with tumbling seas  
About their marble wharves and palaces ;  
And fearful crags and mountains ; and all trod  
By many a changing foot of nymph and God,  
Spear-shaking warrior and slim-ankled maid.

The floor, moreover, of the place was laid  
With coloured stones, wrought like a flowery mead ;  
And ready to the hand for every need,  
Midmost the hall, two fair streams trickled down,  
O'er wondrous gem-like pebbles, green and brown,  
Betwixt smooth banks of marble, and therein  
Bright-coloured fish shone through the water thin.

Now, 'midst these wonders were there tables spread,  
Whither the wandering seafarers were led,  
And there with meat and drink full delicate  
Were feasted, and strange dainty things they ate,  
Of unused savour, and drank godlike wine ;  
While from the golden galleries, divine  
Heart-softening music breathed about the place ;  
And 'twixt the pillars, at a gentle pace,  
Passed lovely damsels, raising voices sweet

*Ops*, Wife of Saturn, whose reign in Latium was known as the Golden Age.

*With richest webs*. Remember the poet's own love of tapestry-making and tapestry.

*The floor, etc.* Notice the clear water-colour effect of this set description.

And shrill unto the music, while their feet  
From thin dusk raiment now and then would gleam  
Upon the polished edges of the stream.

Long sat the Minyæ there, and for their parts  
Few words they said, because, indeed, their hearts,  
O'er-burdened with delight, still dreaded death ;  
Nor did they think that they might long draw breath  
In such an earthly paradise as this,  
But looked to find sharp ending to their bliss.

## BOOK VII

So long they sat, until at last the sun  
Sank in the sea, and noisy day was done.  
Then bade Æetes light the place, that they  
Might turn grim-looking night into the day ;  
Whereon, the scented torches being brought,  
As men with shaded eyes the shadows sought,  
Turning to Jason, spake the king these words :  
" Dost thou now wonder, guest, that with sharp  
swords

And mailèd breasts of men I fence myself,  
Not as a pedlar guarding his poor pelf,  
But as a God shutting the door of heaven ?  
Behold ! O prince, for threescore years and seven  
Have I dwelt here in bliss, nor dare I give  
The Fleece to thee, lest I should cease to live ;  
Nor dare I quite this treasure to withhold,  
Lest to the Gods I seem grown over-bold ;  
For many a cunning man I have, to tell  
Divine foreshadowings of the oracle,  
And thus they warn me. Therefore thou shalt hear  
What well may fill a hero's heart with fear ;  
But not from my old lips ; that thou mayst have,  
Whether thy life thou here wilt spill or save,

*Pelf*, Wealth ; used in contemptuous sense.

At least one joy before thou comest to die :  
Ho ye, bid in my lady presently ! ”

But Jason, wondering what should come of this  
With heart well steeled to suffer woe or bliss,  
Sat waiting, while within the music ceased,  
But from without a strain rose and increased,  
Till shrill and clear it drew anigh the hall,  
But silent at the entry did it fall ;

And through the place there was no other sound  
But falling of light footsteps on the ground,  
For at the door a band of maids was seen,  
Who went up towards the daïs, a lovely queen  
Being in their midst, who, coming nigh the place  
Where the king sat, passed at a gentle pace  
Alone before the others to the board,  
And said : “ Æetes, father, and good lord,  
What is it thou wouldst have of me to-night ? ”

“ O daughter,” said Æetes, “ tell aright  
Unto this king’s son here, who is my guest,  
What things he must accomplish, ere his quest  
Is finished, who has come this day to seek  
The golden fell brought hither by the Greek,  
The son of Athamas, the unlucky king,  
That he may know at last for what a thing  
He left the meadowy land and peaceful stead.”

Then she to Jason turned her golden head,  
And reaching out her lovely arm, took up  
From off the board a rich fair-jewelled cup,  
And said : “ O prince, these hard things must ye do :  
First, going to their stall, bring out the two  
Great brazen bulls, the king my father feeds  
On grass of Pontus and strange-nurtured seeds ;  
Nor heed what they may do, but take the plough  
That in their stall stands ever bright enow,

*A lovely queen, Medea, niece of Circe, and the greatest sorceress in  
Greek story.*

*Fell, Fleece.*

*Pontus, A country on the south-east coast of the Black Sea.*



And on their gleaming necks cast thou the yoke,  
And drive them as thou mayst, with cry and stroke,  
Through the grey acre of the God of war.

"Then, when turned up the long straight furrows  
are,

Take thou the sack that holds the serpent's teeth  
Our fathers slew upon the sunless heath ;  
There sow those evil seeds, and bide thou there  
Till they send forth a strange crop, nothing fair,  
Which garner thou, if thou canst 'scape from death.

"But if thereafter still thou drawest breath,  
Then shalt thou have the seven keys of the shrine  
Wherein the beast's fair golden locks yet shine ;  
But yet sing not the song of triumph then,  
Or think thyself the luckiest of men ;

For just within the brazen temple-gates  
The guardian of the Fleece for ever waits,—  
A fork-tongued dragon, charmed for evermore  
To writhe and wallow on the precious floor,  
Sleepless, upon whose skin no steel will bite.

"If then with such an one thou needs must fight,  
Or knowest arts to tame him, do thy worst,  
Nor, carrying off the prize, shalt thou be curst  
By us or any God. But yet, think well  
If these three things be not impossible  
To any man ; and make a bloodless end  
Of this thy quest, and as my father's friend  
Well gifted, in few days return in peace,  
Lacking for nought, forgetful of the Fleece."

Therewith she made an end ; but while she spoke  
Came Love unseen, and cast his golden yoke  
About them both, and sweeter her voice grew,  
And softer ever, as betwixt them flew,  
With fluttering wings, the new-born strong desire ;  
And when her eyes met his grey eyes, on fire

*Acre, Field.*

*Lacking for, etc.* Notice the use of a trochaic initial foot and a pyrrhic fourth foot to produce a speech-conclusion effect.

With that that burned her, then with sweet new shame  
Her fair face reddened, and there went and came  
Delicious tremors through her. But he said :

“ A bitter song thou singest, royal maid,  
Unto a sweet tune ; yet doubt not that I  
To-morrow this so certain death will try ;  
And dying, may perchance not pass unwept,  
And with sweet memories may my name be kept,  
That men call Jason of the Minyæ.”

Then said she, trembling : “ Take, then, this of  
me,

And drink in token that thy life is passed.  
And that thy reckless hand the die has cast.”

Therewith she reached the cup to him, but he  
Stretched out his hand, and took it joyfully,  
As with the cup he touched her dainty hand,  
Nor was she loth awhile with him to stand,  
Forgetting all else in that honied pain.

At last she turned, and with head raised again  
He drank, and swore for nought to leave that quest  
Till he had reached the worst end or the best ;  
And down the hall the clustering Minyæ  
Shouted for joy his godlike face to see.  
But she, departing, made no further sign  
Of her desires, but, while with song and wine  
They feasted till the fevered night was late,  
Within her chamber sat, made blind by fate.

(Later the same night Medea took boat alone to a  
magic wood, there by help of Artemis to procure a phial  
of protective oil, some potent herbs, and a ball of  
crystal. Artemis delaying help, Medea exclaimed against  
the goddess, who thereupon yielded, but decreed a fear-  
ful penalty to be paid some future day. Medea then  
returned to the town in haste, the dawning light menac-  
ing discovery.)

At last she reached the gilded water-gate,  
And though nigh breathless, scarce she dared to wait

To fasten up her shallop to the stone,  
Which yet she dared not leave ; so this being done,  
Swiftly by passages and stairs she ran,  
Trembling and pale, though not yet seen by man,  
Until to Jason's chamber door she came.

And there awhile indeed she stayed, for shame  
Rose up against her fear ; but mighty love  
And the sea-haunting rose-crowned seed of Jove  
O'ermastered both ; so trembling, on the pin  
She laid her hand, but ere she entered in  
She covered up again her shoulder sweet,  
And dropped her dusky raiment o'er her feet ;  
Then entering the dimly-lighted room,  
Where with the lamp dawn struggled, through the  
gloom,

Seeking the prince she peered, who sleeping lay  
Upon his gold bed, and abode the day  
Smiling, still clad in arms, and round his sword  
His fingers met ; then she, with a soft word,  
Drew nigh him, and from out his slackened hand  
With slender rosy fingers drew the brand,  
Then kneeling, laid her hand upon his breast,  
And said : " O Jason, wake up from thy rest,  
Perchance from thy last rest, and speak to me."

Then fell his light sleep from him suddenly,  
And on one arm he rose and clenched his hand,  
Raising it up, as though it held the brand,  
And on this side and that began to stare.

But bringing close to him her visage fair,  
She whispered : " Smite not, for thou hast no sword.  
Speak not above thy breath, for one loud word  
May slay both thee and me. Day grows apace ;  
What day thou knowest ! Canst thou see my face ?  
Last night thou didst behold it with such eyes,  
That I, Medea, wise among the wise,

*Shallop, Light open boat.*

*Sea-haunting rose-crowned seed of Jove, Venus ; in Greek, Aphrodite.*

The safeguard of my father and his land,  
 Who have been used with steady eyes to stand  
 In awful groves alone with Hecate,  
 Henceforth must call myself the bond of thee,  
 The fool of love ; speak not, but kiss me then,  
 Yea, kiss my lips, that not the best of men  
 Has touched ere thou. Alas, quick comes the day !  
 Draw back, but hearken what I have to say,  
 For every moment do I dread to hear  
 Thy wakened folk, or our folk drawing near ;  
 Therefore I speak as if with my last breath,  
 Shameless, beneath the shadowing wings of death,  
 That still may let us twain again to meet,  
 And snatch from bitter love the bitter sweet  
 That some folk gather while they wait to die.

" Alas, I loiter, and the day is nigh !  
 Soothly I came to bring thee more than this,  
 The memory of an unasked fruitless kiss,  
 Upon thy death-day, which this day would be  
 If there were not some little help in me."

Therewith from out her wallet did she draw  
 The phial, and a crystal without flaw  
 Shaped like an apple, scored with words about,  
 Then said : " But now I bid thee have no doubt.  
 With this oil hidden by these gems and gold  
 Anoint thine arms and body, and be bold,  
 Nor fear the fire-breathing bulls one whit,  
 Such mighty virtue have I drawn to it,  
 Whereof I give thee proof." Therewith her hand  
 She thrust into the lamp-flame that did stand  
 Anigh the bed, and showed it him again  
 Unscarred by any wound or drawn with pain,  
 Then said : " Now, when Mars' plain is ploughed a  
 last

*Hecate*, The dread goddess of sorcery.

*Let us twain again to meet*, Prevent us two from meeting.

*Bitter*. Note the use of repetition for poignant emphasis.

*Mars' plain*, Field for military exercises.

And in the furrows those ill seeds are cast,  
Take thou this ball in hand and watch the thing ;  
Then shalt thou see a horrid crop upspring  
Of all-armed men therefrom to be thy bane,  
Were I not here to make their fury vain.  
Draw not thy sword against them as they rise,  
But cast this ball amid them, and their eyes  
Shall serve them then but little to see thee,  
And each of other's weapons slain shall be.

" Now will my father hide his rage at heart,  
And praise thee much that thou hast played thy part,  
And bid thee to a banquet on this night,  
And pray thee wait until to-morrow's light  
Before thou triest the Temple of the Fleece.  
Trust not to him, but see that unto Greece  
The ship's prow turns, and all is ready there.  
And at the banquet let thy men forbear  
The maddening wine, and bid them arm them all  
For what upon this night may chance to fall.

" Now will I get by stealth the keys that hold  
The seven locks which guard the Fleece of Gold ;  
And while we try the Fleece, let thy men steal,  
Howso they may, unto the ready keel,  
Thus art thou saved alive with thy desire.

" But what thing will be left to me but fire ?  
The fire of fierce despair within my heart,  
The while I reap my guerdon for my part,  
Curses and torments, and in no long space  
Real fire of pine-wood in some rocky place,  
Wreathing around my body greedily,  
A dreadful beacon o'er the leaden sea."

But Jason drew her to him, and he said :  
" Nay, by these tender hands and golden head,  
That saving things for me have wrought to-night.  
I know not what ; may I rather burn,  
Nor may the flame die ever, if I turn  
Back to my hollow ship, and leave thee here,  
Who in one hour art become so dear,

Thy lips so longed for, that at last I know  
Why men have been content to suffer woe  
Past telling, if the Gods but granted this,  
A little while such lips as thine to kiss,  
A little while to drink such deep delight.

“What wouldst thou? Wilt thou go from me?”

The light

Is grey and tender yet, and in your land  
Surely the twilight, lingering long, doth stand  
“Twixt dawn and day.”

“O prince,” she said, “I came  
To save your life. I cast off fear and shame  
A little while, but fear and shame are here.  
The hand thou holdest trembles with my fear,  
With shame my cheeks are burning, and the sound  
Of mine own voice : but ere this hour comes round,  
We twain will be betwixt the dashing oars,  
The ship still making for the Grecian shores.  
Farewell till then, though in the lists to-day  
Thyself shalt see me watching out the play.”

Therewith she drew off from him, and was gone,  
And in the chamber Jason left alone,  
Praising the heavenly one, the Queen of Jove,  
Pondered upon this unasked gift of love,  
And all the changing wonder of his life.

But soon he rose to fit him for the strife,  
And ere the sun his orb began to lift  
O'er the dark hills, with fair Medea's gift  
His arms and body he anointed well,  
And round about his neck he hung the spell  
Against the earth-born, the fair crystal ball  
Laid in a purse, and then from wall to wall,  
Athwart the chamber paced full eagerly,  
Expecting when the fateful time should be.

*A little while, etc.* Note the repetition to produce a dwelt-on effect of longing.

## BOOK VIII

Now when she woke again the bright sun glared  
In at the window, and the trumpets blared,  
Shattering the sluggish air of that hot day,  
For fain the king would be upon his way.

And she descending, came into the hall,  
And found her father clad in royal pall,  
Holding the ivory rod of sovereignty,  
And Jason and his folk were standing by.

Now was Æetes saying : " Minyæ,  
And you, my people, who are here by me,  
Take heed, that by his wilful act to-day  
This man will perish, neither will I slay  
One man among you. Nay, Prince, if ye will,  
A safe return I give unto you still."

But Jason answered, smiling in his joy :  
" Once more, Æetes, nay. Against this toy  
My life is pledged, let all go to the end."  
Then, lifting up his eyes, he saw his friend,  
Made fresh and lovelier by her quiet rest,  
And set his hand upon his mailed breast,  
Where in its covering lay the crystal ball.

But the king said : " Then let what will fall, fall !  
Since time it is that we were on the way ;  
And thou, O daughter, shalt be there to-day,  
And see thy father's glory once more shown  
Before our folk and those the wind has blown  
From many lands to see this play played out."

Then raised the Colchians a mighty shout,  
And doubtful grew the Minyæ of the end,  
Unwitting who on that day was their friend.  
But down the hall the king passed, who did hold  
Medea's hand, and on a car of gold

*Pall*, Mantle.

*Fall, fall*. Note the decisive, doom-like effect of the repetition.  
(2,668)

They mounted, drawn anigh the carven door,  
And spearmen of the Colchians went before  
And followed after, and the Minyæ  
Set close together followed solemnly,  
Headed by Jason, at the heels of these.

So passed they through the streets and palaces  
Thronged with much folk, and o'er the bridges passed,  
And to the open country came at last,  
Nor there went far, but turning to the right,  
Into a close they came, where there were dight  
Long galleries about the fateful stead,  
Built all of marble fair and roofed with lead,  
And carved about with stories of old time,  
And all around them golden lines of rhyme.  
Moreover, midmost was an unage made  
Of mighty Mars who maketh kings afraid,  
That looked down on an altar builded fair,  
Wherefrom already did a fire glare  
And made the hot air glassy with its heat.

So in the gallery did the king take seat  
With fair Medea, and the Colehians stood  
Hedging the twain in with a mighty wood  
Of spears and axes, while the Minyæ  
Stood off a space the fated things to see.

Ugly and rugged was that spot of ground,  
And with an iron wall was closed around,  
And at the farther end a monstrous cage  
Of iron bars, shut in the stupid rage  
Of those two beasts, and therefrom ever came  
The flashing and the scent of sulphurous flame,  
As with their brazen clangorous bellowing  
They hailed the coming of the Colehian king ;  
Nor was there one of the seafaring men  
But trembled, gazing on the deadly pen,  
But Jason only, who before the rest  
Shone like a star, having upon his breast



A golden corselet from the treasury  
Of wise King Phineus by the doubtful sea,  
By an Egyptian wrought who would not stay  
At Salmydessa more than for a day,  
But on that day the wondrous breastplate wrought,  
Which with good will and strong help Jason bought ,  
And from that treasury his golden shoe  
Came, and his thighs the king's gift covered too ;  
But on his head his father's helm was set  
Wreathed round with bay leaves, and his sword lay  
yet

Within the scabbard, while his ungloved hand  
Bore nought within it but an olive wand.

Now King *Æetes* well beholding him,  
Fearless of mien and so unmatched of limb,  
Trembled a little in his heart as now  
He bade the horn-blowers the challenge blow,  
But thought, " What strength can help him, or what  
heart,

Or which of all the Gods be on his part ? "  
Impious, who knew not through what doubtful days,  
E'en from his birth, and perilous rough ways  
Juno had brought him safely, nor indeed  
Of his own daughter's quivering lips took heed,  
And restless hands wherein the God so wrought,  
The wise man seeing her had known her thought.

Now Jason, when he heard the challenge blow,  
Across the evil fallow 'gan to go  
With face beyond its wont in nowise pale,  
Nor footsteps faltering, if that might avail  
The doomed man aught : so to the cage he came,  
Whose bars now glowed red-hot with spouted flame,  
In many a place ; nor doubted any one  
Who there beheld him that his days were done,  
Except his love alone ; and even she,  
Sickening with doubt and terror, scarce could see

The hero draw the brazen bolt aside  
And throw the glowing wicket open wide.

But he alone, apart from his desire,  
Stood unarmed, facing those two founts of fire,  
Yet feared not aught, for hope and fear were dead  
Within his heart, and utter hardihead  
Had Juno set there ; but the awful beasts  
Beholding now the best of all their feasts,  
Roared in their joy and fury, till from sight  
They and the prince were hidden by the white  
Thick-rolling clouds of sulphurous pungent smoke,  
Through which upon the blinded man they broke.

But when within a yard of him they came,  
Baffled they stopped, still bellowing, and the flame  
Still spouting out from nostril and from mouth,  
As from some island mountain in the south  
The trembling mariners behold it cast ;  
But still to right and left of him it passed,  
Breaking upon him as cool water might,  
Nor harming more, except that from his sight  
All corners of the cage were hidden now,  
Nor knew he where to seek the brazen plough ;  
As to and fro about the quivering cage  
The monsters rushed in helpless and blind rage.

But as he doubted, to his eyes alone  
Within the place a golden light outshone,  
Scattering the clouds of smoke, and he beheld  
Once more the Goddess who his head upheld  
In rough Anaurus on that other tide ;  
She, smiling on him, beckoned and 'gan glide  
With rosy feet across the fearful floor,  
Breathing cool odours round her, till a door  
She opened to him in the iron wall,  
Through which he passed, and found a grisly stall  
Of iron still, and at one end of it,  
By glimmering lamps with greenish flame half lit,  
Beheld the yoke and shining plough he sought ;  
Which, seizing straight, by mighty strength he brought

Unto the door, nor found the Goddess there.

Meanwhile upon the foreheads of the twain  
Had Jason cast the yoke with little pain,  
And drove them now with shouts out through the  
door

Which in such guise ne'er had they passed before :  
For never were they made the earth to till,  
But rather, feeding fat, to work the will  
Of some all-knowing man ; but now they went  
Like any peasant's beasts, tamed by the scent  
Of those new herbs Medea's hand had plucked,  
Whose roots from evil earth strange power had sucked.

Now in the open field did Jason stand  
And to the plough-stilts set his unused hand,  
And down betwixt them lustily he bent ;  
Then the bulls drew, and the bright ploughshare  
sent

The loathly fallow up on the right side,  
Whilst o'er their bellowing shrilly Jason cried :  
" Draw nigh, O king, and thy new ploughman see,  
Then mayst thou make me shepherd, too, to thee."

Such mocks he said ; but when the sunlight broke  
Upon his armour through the sulphurous smoke,  
And showed the lengthening furrow cutting through  
The ugly fallow as anigh they drew,  
The joyful Minyæ gave a mighty shout ;  
But pale the king sat with brows knit for doubt,  
Muttering : " Whose counsel hast thou taken, then,  
To do this thing, which not the best of men  
Could do unholpen of some sorcery ?  
Whoso it is, wise were he now to die  
Ere yet I know him, since for many a day  
Vainly for death I hope to hear him pray."

Again with his last words the shouts broke out  
From the seafarers, for, beside the yoke,

Before Mars' altar did Prince Jason stand,  
Holding the wand of olive in his hand,  
And on the new-turned furrow shone the sun  
Behind him, and his half-day's work was done.

And now another marvel : for, behold,  
As at the furrow's end he slacked his hold  
Upon the plough-stilts, all the bellowing  
Wherewith the beasts had made the grim close ring,  
Fell suddenly, and all the fire died  
That they were wont erewhile to scatter wide  
From mouth and nostril ; and their loins and knees  
Stiffened, and they grew nought but images  
Lifelike but lifeless, wonderful but dead ;  
Such as he makes, who many a day hath fed  
His furnace with the beechwood, when the clay  
Has grown beneath his deft hands day by day  
And all is ready for the casting ; then  
Such things as these he makes for royal men.

" O Jason," said the king, " well mayst thou live  
For many a day, since thou this deed hast done,  
But for the Gods, not unto any one  
Will I give gifts ; but let them take from me  
What once they gave, if so the thing must be.  
But do thou take this sack from out my hand  
And cast its seed about the new-tilled land,  
And watch the issue ; and keep words till then,  
I counsel thee, O luckiest of men."

Then Jason took the sack, and with it went  
About that field new turned, and broadcast sent  
The white teeth scattering, but ere he came  
Back to the altar and the flickering flame,  
He heard from 'neath the earth a muttered sound  
That grew and grew, till all that piece of ground  
Swelled into little hillocks, like as where  
A stricken field was foughten, but that there  
Quiet the heroes' bones lie underneath

The quivering grasses and the dusky heath ;  
But now these heaps the labouring earth upthrew  
About Mars' acre, ever greater grew,  
And still increased the noise, till none could hear  
His fellow speak, and paleness and great fear  
Fell upon all ; and Jason only stood  
As stands the stout oak in the poplar wood  
When winds are blowing.

Then he saw the mounds  
Bursten asunder, and the muttered sounds  
Changed into loud strange shouts and warlike clang,  
As with freed feet at last the earth-born sprang  
On to the tumbling earth, and the sunlight  
Shone on bright arms clean ready for the fight.

But terribly they showed, for through the place  
Not one there was but had his staring face,  
With great wide eyes, and lips in a set smile,  
Turned full on Jason, who, for a short while,  
Forgot indeed Medea's warning word,  
And from its golden sheath half drew his sword,  
But then, remembering all, cried valiantly :  
" New born ye are—new slain too shall ye be,  
Take this, and round about it read your doom,  
And bid them make new dwellings in the tomb,  
Wherefrom ye came, nor ever should have passed."

Therewith the ball among the host he cast,  
Standing to watch what next that folk would do.  
But he the ball had smitten turned unto  
The one who stood by him and like a cup  
Shattered his head ; then the next lifted up  
His axe and slew the slayer, and straightway  
Among the rest began a deadly fray.

No man gave back a foot, no breathing space  
One took or gave within that dreadful place,  
But where the vanquished stood there was he slain,  
And straight the conquering arm was raised again  
To meet its match and in its turn to fall.  
No tide was there of fainting and recall,

No quivering pennon o'er their heads to flit,  
 Nor name or eager shout called over it,  
 No groan of pain, and no despairing cry  
 From him who knows his time has come to die ;  
 But passionless each bore him in that fight,  
 Scarce otherwise than as a smith might smite  
 On sounding iron or bright glittering brass.

So, little by little, did the clamour pass  
 As one by one each fell down in his place,  
 Until at last, midmost the bloody space,  
 One man was left, alive but wounded sore,  
 Who, staring round about and seeing no more  
 His brothers' spears against him, fixed his eyes  
 Upon the queller of those mysteries.  
 Then dreadfully they gleamed, and with no word,  
 He tottered towards him with uplifted sword.  
 But scarce he made three paces down the field,  
 Ere chill death reached his heart, and on his shield  
 Clattering he fell. So satiate of fight  
 Quickly the earth-born were, and their delight  
 With what it fed on perished, and one hour  
 Ripened the deadly fruit of that fell flower.

Then, Jason, mocking, cried unto the king :  
 " O wonderful, indeed, must be the thing  
 Thou guardest with such wondrous guards as these ;  
 Make no delay therefore, but bring the keys  
 That I may see this dear delight of all."

But on Æetes' face a change did fall,  
 As though a mask had been set over it,  
 And smiles of little meaning 'gan to flit  
 O'er his thin lips, as he spake out at last :  
 " No haste, dear guest, for surely now is passed  
 All enmity from twixt us, since I know  
 How like a God thou art ; and thou shalt go

*No quivering, &c.* Notice in this sentence the negative repetition to produce a grand positive climax.

*Satiate of fight*, More than satisfied with. An unexpectedly Latinized expression for Morris.

To-morrow to thy ship, to make for Greece ;  
And with no trial more, bear back the Fleece  
Along our streets, and like no conquered thing,  
But with much scattered flowers and tabouring,  
Bearing with it great gifts and all my love ;  
And in return, I pray thee, pray to Jove,  
That I may have a few more years of life,  
And end at last in honour, free from strife.

And now to-night be merry, and let time  
Be clean forgotten, and bring Saturn's clime  
And golden days upon our flower-crowned brows,  
For of the unseen future what man knows ? "

" O king," said Jason, " for these words I praise  
Thy wisdom much, and wish thee happy days.  
And I will give thee honour as I can,  
Naming thee ever as a noble man

Through all the lands I come to : and will take  
Thy gifts, indeed, and thou, for Jason's sake,  
Shalt have gifts too, whatso thy soul may wish,  
From out our keel that has escaped the fish."

So spake those wary foes, fair friends in look,  
And so in words great gifts they gave and took,  
And had small profit, and small loss thereby.  
Nor less Medea feigned, but angrily  
Regarded Jason, and across her brow  
Drew close her veil, nor doubted the king now  
Her faith and loyalty.

So from the place  
Back toward the town they turned at a soft pace,  
In guise of folk that hold high festival,  
Since straightly had Æetes bid that all  
Should do the strangers pleasure on that day.  
But warily went Jason on the way,  
And through his folk spread words, to take good heed  
Of what might come, and ready be at need,

*Tabouring, Playing on small drums.*

*Saturn's clime and golden days, The golden age of prosperity and*

Nor yet to take Æetes for their friend,  
Since even then he plotted how to end  
Their quest and lives : therefore he bade them spare  
The wine that night, nor look on damsels fair ;  
But that, the feast done, all should stealthily  
Get to the quay, and round about to sea  
Turn Argo's head, and wait like hounds in slip,  
Holding the oars, within the hollow ship.

" Nor doubt," said he, " that good and glorious  
The end shall be, since all the Gods for us  
Are fighting certainly : but should death come  
Upon me in this land, then turn back home,  
Nor wait till they shall lay your bones with mine,  
Since now I think to go unto the shrine,  
The while ye wait, and take therefrom the Fleece,  
Not all unholpen, and depart in peace,  
While yet the barbarous king beholds us dead  
In dreams alone, or through his waking head  
The vile plots chase each other for our death."

These things he said, but scarce above his breath,  
Unto wise Nestor, who beside him went,  
Who unto Butes straight the message sent,  
And he to Phhas, so the words at last  
Throughout the wondering seafarers had passed,  
And so were all made ready for the night.

But on that eve, with manifold delight,  
Æetes feasted them in his fair hall ;  
But they, well knowing what might chance to fall,  
Sat saying little, nor drank deep of wine ;  
Until at last the old king gave the sign  
To break the feast up, and within a while  
All seemed asleep throughout the mighty pile.

All seemed asleep, but now Medea went  
With beating heart to work out her intent,  
Scarce doubtful of the end, since only two  
In all the world, she and Æetes, knew  
Where the keys were, far from the light of day,  
Beneath the palace. So, in garments grey,



Like the soft creeping twilight did she go,  
Until she reached a passage far below  
The river, past whose oozing walls of stone  
She and the king alone had ever gone.

Now she, who thus far had come through the  
dark,

Stopped, and in haste striking a little spark  
From something in her hand, lit up a lamp,  
Whose light fell on an iron door, with damp  
All rusted red, which with a key of brass  
She opened, and there-through made haste to pass,  
Shuddering a little, as her feet 'gan tread  
Upon a dank cold floor, though overhead  
High-arched the place was, fairly built enow.

But she across the slippery floor did go  
Unto the other wall, wherein was built  
A little aumbrye, with a door o'ergilt,  
That with the story of King Athamas,  
And Phryxus, and the ram all carven was.  
There did she draw forth from her balmy breast  
A yellow flowering herb, that straight she pressed  
Upon the lock, low muttering the while ;  
But soon across her face there passed a smile,  
As backward in the lock the bolts did turn,  
And the door opened ; then a golden urn,  
She saw within the aumbrye, whereon she  
Drew out the thing she sought for eagerly,  
The seven keys with sere-cloth done about.  
Then through the dreary door did she pass out,  
And made it fast, and went her way once more  
Through the black darkness on from floor to floor.

And so, being come to Jason, him she found  
All armed, and ready ; therefore, with no sound,  
She beckoned him to follow, and the twain  
Passed through the brazen doors, locked all in vain,  
Such virtue had the herb Medea bore,

*Aumbrye*, Cupboard.

*Sere-cloth*, Cere-cloth, waxed cloth.

And passing, did they leave ajar each door,  
To give more ease unto the Minyæ.

So out into the fresh night silently  
The lovers passed, the lovehest of the land ;  
But as they went, neither did hand touch hand.  
Or face seek face ; for, gladsome as they were,  
Trembling with joy to be at last so near  
The wished-for day, some God yet seemed to be  
'Twixt the hard past and their felicity.

## BOOK IX

BUT when they reached the precinct of the God,  
And on the hallowed turf their feet now trod,  
Medea turned to Jason, and she said :

" Now follow me, though little shalt thou do  
To gain this thing, if Hecate be true  
Unto her servant. Nay, draw not thy sword,  
And, for thy life, speak not a single word  
Until I bid thee, else may all be lost,  
And of this game our lives yet pay the cost."

Then toward the brazen temple-door she went,  
Wherefrom, half open, a faint gleam was sent ;  
For little need of lock it had forsooth,  
Because its sleepless guardian knew no ruth,  
And had no lust for precious things or gold ;  
Whom, drawing near, Jason could now behold,  
As back Medea thrust the heavy door,  
For prone he lay upon the gleaming floor,  
Not moving, though his restless, glittering eyes  
Gave unto them no least hope of surprise.  
Hideous he was, where all things else were fair ;  
Dull-skinned, foul-spotted, with lank rusty hair  
About his neck ; and hooked yellow claws  
Just showed from 'neath his belly and huge jaws,  
Closed in the hideous semblance of a smile.

Then Jason shuddered, wondering with what wile  
That fair king's daughter such a beast could tame,  
And of his sheathed sword had but little shame.

But being within the doors, both mantle grey  
And heavy gown Medea cast away,  
And in thin clinging silk alone was clad,  
And round her neck a golden chain she had,  
Whereto was hung a harp of silver white.  
Then the great dragon, at that glittering sight,  
Raised himself up upon his loathly feet,  
As if to meet her, while her fingers sweet  
Already moved amongst the golden strings,  
Preluding nameless and delicious things ;  
But now she beckoned Jason to her side,  
For slowly towards them 'gan the beast to glide,  
And when close to his love the hero came,  
She whispered breathlessly : " On me the blame  
If here we perish ; if I give the word,  
Then know that all is lost, and draw thy sword,  
And manlike die in battle with the beast ;  
Peace, for he cometh ! O thou Goddess bright,  
What help wilt thou be unto me this night ? "

So murmured she, while ceaselessly she drew  
Her fingers through the strings, and fuller grew  
The tinkling music, but the beast drawn nigh  
Went slower still, and turning presently  
Began to move around them in a ring.  
And as he went, there fell a strange rattling  
Of his dry scales ; but as he turned, she turned,  
Nor failed to meet the eyes that on her burned  
With steadfast eyes, and, lastly, clear and strong  
Her voice broke forth in sweet melodious song :

" O evil thing, what brought thee here  
To be a wonder and a fear  
Unto the river-haunting folk ?  
I bid thee now to yield to me,  
Her maid, who overmastered thee, .

The Three-formed dreadful one who reigns  
In heaven and the fiery plains,  
But on the green earth best of all.

"Lo, now thine upraised crest let fall,  
Relax thy limbs, let both thine eyes  
Be closed, and bestial fantasies  
Fill thy dull head till dawn of day  
And we are far upon our way."

As thus she sung the beast seemed not to hear  
Her words at first, but ever drew anear,  
Circling about them, and Medea's face  
Grew pale unto the lips, though still the place  
Rung with the piercing sweetness of her song;  
But slower soon he dragged his length along,  
And on his limbs he tottered, till at last  
All feebly by the wondering prince he passed,  
And whining to Medea's feet he crept,  
With eyes half closed, as though well-nigh he slept,  
And there before her laid his head adown;  
Who, shuddering, on his wrinkled neck and brown  
Set her white foot, and whispered: "Haste, O love!  
Behold the keys; haste! while the Gods above  
Are friendly to us; there behold the shrine  
Where thou canst see the lamp of silver shine.  
Nay, draw not death upon both thee and me  
With fearless kisses; fear, until the sea  
Shall fold green arms about us lovingly,  
And kindly Venus to thy keel be nigh."

Then lightly from her soft side Jason stept,  
While still upon the beast her foot she kept,  
Still murmuring softly many an unknown word,  
As when through half-shut casements the brown bird  
We hearken when the night is come in June,  
And thick-leaved woods are 'twixt us and his tune.

*The Three-formed dreadful one, Hecate, three-formed because she was  
Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in hell (the fiery  
plains). Same as Artemis.  
Brown bird, Nightingale.*

But Jason, going swiftly with good heart,  
Came to the wished-for shrine built all apart  
Midmost the temple, that on pillars stood  
Of jasper green, and marble red as blood,  
All white itself and carven cunningly  
With Neptune bringing from the wavy sea  
The golden shining ram to Athamas ;  
And the first door thereof of silver was,  
Wrought over with a golden glittering sun  
That seemed well-nigh alike the heavenly one.  
Such art therein the cunningest of men  
Had used ; which little Jason heeded then,  
But thrusting in the lock the smallest key  
Of those he bore, it opened easily ;  
And then five others, neither wrought of gold,  
Or carved with tales, or lovely to behold,  
He opened ; but before the last one stayed  
His hand, wherein the heavy key he weighed,  
And pondering, in low muttered word, he said :  
" The prize is reached, which yet I somewhat dread  
To draw unto me ; since I know indeed,  
That henceforth war and toil shall be my meed.—  
May all be well, and on the noisy ways  
Still may I find some wealth of happy days."

Therewith he threw the last door open wide,  
Whose hammered iron did the marvel hide,  
And shut his dazzled eyes, and stretched his hands  
Out toward the sea-born wonder of all lands,  
And buried them deep in the locks of gold,  
Grasping the fleece within his mighty hold.

Which when Medea saw, her gown of grey  
She caught up from the ground, and drew away  
Her wearied foot from off the rugged beast,  
And while from her soft strain she never ceased,  
Jason drew nigh, joyful, yet still afraid,  
She met him, and her wide grey mantle laid

*The prize is reached.*—A passage of extraordinary pathos. It marks the high point of the "arch" of the story.

Over the Fleece, whispering : " Make no delay ;  
 He sleeps, who never slept by night or day  
 Till now ; nor will his charmed sleep be long.  
 Light-foot am I, and sure thine arms are strong ;  
 Haste, then ! No word ! nor turn about to gaze."

Then swiftly did they leave the dreadful place,  
 Turning no look behind, and reached the street,  
 That with familiar look and kind did greet  
 Those wanderers, mazed with marvels and with fear.  
 And so, unchallenged, did they draw anear  
 The long white quays, and at the street's end now  
 Beheld the ships' masts standing row by row  
 Stark black against the stars : then cautiously  
 Peered Jason forth, ere they took heart to try  
 The open starlit place ; but nought he saw  
 Except the night-wind twitching the loose straw  
 From half-unloaded keels, and nought he heard  
 But the strange twittering of a caged green bird  
 Within an Indian ship, and from the hill  
 A distant baying ; yea, all was so still :  
 Somewhat they doubted ; nathless forth they passed,  
 And Argo's painted sides they reached at last.

On whom down-looking, scarce more noise they heard  
 Than from the other ships ; some muttered word,  
 Some creaking of the timbers, as the tide  
 Ran gurgling seaward past her shielded side.  
 Then Jason knelt, and whispered : " Wise be ye,  
 O fair companions on the pathless sea ;  
 Take me amongst you, neither be afraid  
 To take withal this gold, and this fair maid.  
 Yare !—for the ebb runs strongly towards the sea."

*And nought he heard, etc.* This passage is a touchstone of Morris's pictorial power ; and romantically suggests some inevitable crisis, and a long farewell to pleasant, familiar things. The homely details make the very magic just previously described seem possible.

*Shielded side.* To hang shields over the ship's side was a Norse, not a Greek, practice.

*Yare, Quick.*

Then saw Medea men like shadows grey,  
Rise from the darksome decks, who took straightway  
With murmured joy, from Jason's outstretched hands,  
The conquered Fleece, the wonder of all lands,  
While with strong arms he took the royal maid,  
And in their hold the precious burthen laid,  
And scarce her dainty feet could touch the deck,  
Ere down he leapt, and little now did reck  
That loudly clanged his armour therewithal.

But, turning townward, did Medea call :  
" O noble Jason, and ye heroes strong,  
To sea, to sea ! nor play ye loiter long ;  
For surely shall ye see the beacons flare  
Ere in mid stream ye are, and running fair  
On toward the sea with tide, and oar, and sail.  
My father wakes, nor bides he to bewail  
His loss and me ; I see his turret gleam  
As he goes towards the beacon, and downstream  
Absyrtus lurks before the sandy bar  
In mighty keel well manned and dight for war."

But as she spoke, rattling the cable slipped  
From out the hawse-hole, and the long oars dipped  
As from the quays the heroes pushed away,  
And in the loosened sail the wind 'gan play ;  
But e'en as they unto the stroke leaned back,  
And Nauplius, catching at the main-sheet slack  
Had drawn it taut, out flared the beacon wide,  
Lighting the waves, and they heard folk who cried :  
" Awake, awake, awake, O Colchian folk ! "  
And all about the blare of horns outbroke,  
As watch-tower answered watch-tower down the  
stream,  
Where far below they saw the bale-fires gleam ;  
And galloping of horses now they heard,  
And clang of arms, and cries of men afeard ;

*Absyrtus*, The brother of Medea.

*Hawse-hole*, Hole for cable of anchor to pass through.

*Bale-fires*, Beacons.

(2,868)

For now the merchant mariners who lay  
 About the town, thought surely an ill day  
 Had dawned upon them while they slept at ease,  
 And, half awake, pushed madly from the quays  
 With crash of breaking oars and meeting ships,  
 And cries and curses from outlandish lips ;  
 So fell the quiet night to turmoil sore,  
 While in the towers, over the uproar,  
 Melodiously the bells began to ring.

But Argo, leaping foward to the swing  
 Of measured oars, and leaning to the breeze,  
 Sped swiftly 'twixt the dark and whispering trees :  
 And as the mingled noises did decrease  
 With added distance, and behind them night  
 Grew wan with coming of the eastern light,  
 Across the strings his fingers Orpheus drew,  
 And through the woods his wingèd music flew.

And he sung joyously, nor knew that they  
 Must wander yet for many an evil day  
 Or ever the dread Gods should let them come  
 Back to the white walls of their long-left home.

Now swift beneath the oar-strokes Argo flew,  
 While the sun rose behind them, and they drew  
 Unto the river's mouth, nor failed to see  
 Absyrtus' galley waiting watchfully  
 Betwixt them and the white-topped turbid bar.  
 Therefore they gat them ready now for war  
 With joyful hearts, for sharp they sniffed the sea,  
 And saw the great waves tumbling green and free  
 Outside the bar upon the way to Greece,  
 The rough green way to glory and sweet peace.

Then to the prow gat Jason, and the maid  
 Must needs be with him, though right sore afraid,  
 As nearing now the Colchian ship, they hung

*With crash . . . flew.* Notice the onomatopœia.  
*The way to Greece . . . peace.* Note the description by a line in  
 apposition, a favourite poetic device.



On balanced oars ; but the wild Arcas strung  
His deadly bow, and clomb into the top.

Then Jason cried : " Absyrtus, will ye stop  
Our peaceful keel, or let us take the sea ?  
Soothly, have we no will to fight with thee  
If we may pass unfoughten, therefore say,  
What is it thou wilt have this dawn of day ? "

Now on the other prow Absyrtus stood,  
His visage red with eager wrathful blood,  
And in his right hand shook a mighty spear,  
And said : " O seafarers, ye pass not here,  
For gifts or prayers, but if it must be so,  
Over our sunken bulwarks shall ye go ;  
Nor ask me why, for thus my father wills,  
Yet, as I now behold you, my heart thrills  
With wrath indeed ; and hearken for what cause !  
That ye against all friendship and good laws  
Bear off my sister with you ; wherefore now  
Mars give you courage and a brazen brow !  
That ye may try this dangerous pass in vain,  
For soothly of your slaughter am I fain."

Then Jason wrathfully threw up his head,  
But ere the shout came, fair Medea said,  
In trembling whisper thrilling through his ear :

" Haste, quick upon them ! if before is fear,  
Behind is death ! " Then Jason turning, saw  
A tall ship staggering with the gusty flaw,  
Just entering the long reach where they were,  
And heard her horns through the fresh morning air.

Then lifted he his hand, and with a cry  
Back flew the balanced oars full orderly,  
And toward the doomed ship mighty Argo passed ;  
Thereon Absyrtus shouted loud, and cast

*Bulwarks*, Ship's side above deck. Example of synecdoche.

*Flaw*, Squall.

*Then lifted he . . . Argo out.* Ends one of the best passages of concentrated action-description in the poem. But where does it verge on unconscious humour ?

His spear at Jason, that before his feet  
Stuck in the deck ; then out the arrows fleet  
Burst from the Colchians ; and scarce did they spare  
Medea's trembling side and bosom fair ;  
But Jason, roaring as the lioness  
When round her helpless whelps the hunters press,  
Whirled round his head his mighty brass-bound spear  
That flying, smote the prince beneath the ear,  
As Arcas' arrow sunk into his side.  
Then falling, scarce he met the rushing tide,  
Ere Argo's mighty prow had thrust apart  
The huddled oars, and through the fair ship's heart  
Had thrust her iron beak, then the green wave  
Rushed in as rush the waters through a cave  
That tunnels half a sea-girt lonely rock.  
Then drawing swiftly backward from the shock,  
And heeding not the cries of fear and woe,  
They left the waters dealing with their foe ;  
Then at the following ship threw back a shout,  
And seaward o'er the bar drave Argo out.

Then joyful felt all men as now at last  
From hill to green hill of the sea they passed ;  
But chiefly joyed Medea, as now grew  
The Colchian hills behind them faint and blue,  
And like a white speck showed the following ship.  
There 'neath the canopy, lip pressed to lip,  
They sat and told their love, till scarce he thought  
What precious burden back to Greece he brought.

So passed this day, and she no less forgot  
That wreck upon the bar, the evil spot,  
Red with a brother's blood, where long was stayed  
The wrathful king as from the stream he weighed  
The bleeding body of his well-loved son.

Lo, in such wise their journey was begun,  
And so began short love and long decay,  
Sorrow that bides and joy that fleets away.

*And so began . . . away.*—Note the epigrammatic conclusion.

## BOOK X

NIGHT came, but still on by the stars they sailed  
Before the wind, till at the dawn it failed,  
And faded soon the sunrise pure away,  
Leaving the heavens colourless and grey.

And soon before their way it seemed as though  
A curtain hung they needs must journey through,  
A low black mist so brooded o'er the sea.  
So with the windless swell did Argo fare  
Two days with furled sails purposeless and blind,  
And bearing heavy hearts ; the third, the wind  
Sprung up at daybreak, and straight drove away  
That hideous mist, that after sunrise lay  
A heavy purple bank down in the west.

Then by the sun his way Erginus guessed,  
For on no side could they see any land ;  
But as upon the helm he set his hand  
Such mighty light blazed out upon the prow,  
That faint and yellow did the sunlight show  
Beside it, and amidst it they beheld  
The figure that ere now their hands had held  
Anigh the Mysian shore ; and now it said :

“ O heroes, wherefore haste ye to be dead ?  
Behold, while through the heart of yonder fog  
I, Argo, drifted as an unsteered log,  
Æetes passed us going towards the straits,  
And now is lying ready by the gates ;  
Nor with one ship alone, but with ten keels,  
Raised from his subject kings and commonweals.

“ But now the Gods, taking your swift return  
Away from you, yet will not let you die ;  
But bid you, taking heart, turn presently  
Unto the northern shore of this ill sea ;

There by a mighty river shall ye be,  
Along whose sides dwell the Sarmatian folk,  
Knowing no arts, untaught to bear the yoke  
Of equal laws ; into this river's mouth  
Straight must ye enter, and forget the south,  
And many unknown lands and unknown seas,  
And deadly forests, vocal with no breeze,  
Shall ye go wandering through ; but, long time past,  
Unto the seas ye know shall come at last.

" And so, by many troubles being tried,  
Unto Iolchos shall ye all come back  
Except some few ; nor there find any lack  
Of much-desired wealth and babbling praise,  
And so each man depart unto such days  
As the fates grant him, be they good or ill,  
With death at last according to their will."

With these last words she vanished quite away,  
And these, left floating on that dawn of day,  
Felt severed utterly from hoped-for things ;  
Like some caged eagle that, with fluttering wings,  
Beats at his bars, beholding far away  
His windy cyrie up the mountain grey.

—A while ago, and every man nigh saw  
The long white walls rise sunny without flaw  
From out the curled white edges of the sea ;  
Yea, almost felt as if they well might be  
In fair Iolchos that same afternoon.

And now how many and many a glittering moon  
Must fill her horns up, while their lives were spent  
In unknown lands 'mid helpless dreariment !

But as his fellows, speechless and amazed,

*Mighty river*, The Dnieper ; in Greek, Borysthenes. The route is apparently then by the Pripet tributary, and an overland track to the Vistula, and along the Vistula to the Baltic Sea. In Apollonius Rhodius the route was via the Danube to the Adriatic, up the Po and across to the Rhone, down the Rhone into the Mediterranean, and then by a circuitous course home, touching Africa.

*Sarmatian folk*, An Asiatic race in South Russia.

Upon the weary sea so stood and gazed,  
Spake Jason to them : " Heroes, tell me where  
Your hearts are gone, since helpless thus ye stare  
On that which helpeth not ? in no such wise  
A while ago, before Æetes' eyes  
Ye smote the Colchian ship ; with other heart  
Ye drave the dark blue Clashers far apart.

" What will ye ? Is it then so hard a thing  
That we, through many countries wandering,  
Shall see unheard-of things, nor fail to come  
When yet our blood is warm, back to our home ?  
Be merry, think upon the lives of men,  
And with what troubles threescore years and ten  
Are crowded oft, yea, even unto him  
Who sits at home, nor fears for life and limb,  
But trembles the base slave unto a slave ;  
Or holding trifles he is fain to save,  
Sits pleasureless and wearing out his life,  
Or with vain words wages disgraceful strife  
That leads nowhither, till forgotten death  
Seizes the babbler, choking out his breath.

" But ye—forgot all—get ye to the oar,  
And steer rejoicing to the northern shore,  
Since we shall win such glory and renown,  
That, coming home again to our fair town,  
Those left behind shall count us all for lords,  
And tremble, gazing at our sheathèd swords.  
Fair is the wind, the sunny dawn is clear,  
Nor are we bound for Pluto's kingdom drear,  
But for fair forests, plentiful of beasts,  
Where, innocent of craft, with joyous feasts  
The wise folk live as in the golden age.  
Doubt not at all that they will welcome us  
As very Gods, with all things plenteous."

So spake he, knowing nought of that same land ;  
Natheless, they, noting him as he did stand  
Beside Erginus with unclouded face,

Took heart again, and to the oars apace  
 They gat and toiled, forgetting half the word  
 That from great Argo's sprite ere now they heard.  
 Nor thinking of the ills that they might meet,  
 But of the day when their returning feet  
 Should bear them, full of knowledge, wealth, and fame,  
 Up to the royal hall wherefrom they came.

Now northward Argo steered for two days more,  
 Until at last they came in sight of shore,  
 And creeping on, they found a river-mouth,  
 That a long spit of land fenced from the south.  
 And turned due west ; and now at ebb full strong  
 Turbid and yellow rolled its stream along,  
 That scarce could Argo stem it ; wherefore they,  
 It being but early, anchored till mid-day,  
 And as they waited, saw an eddy rise  
 Where sea joined river, and before their eyes  
 The battle of the waters did begin.  
 So seeing the mighty ocean best therein  
 Weighing their anchor, they made haste to man  
 Both oars and sails, and therewith plying, ran  
 With the first wave of the great conquering flood  
 Far up the stream, on whose banks forests stood,  
 Darkening the swirling water on each side.

And now between them swiftly did they glide,  
 And now no more they smelt the fresh salt sea,  
 Or heard the steady wind pipe boisterously  
 Through the strained rigging, neither with their feet  
 Set wide the pitching of their ship to meet  
 Went to and fro ; for all was quiet now  
 But gurgling of the stream beside the prow,  
 And flapping of the well-nigh useless sail,  
 And from the black woods some faint dismal wail,  
 Whether of man or beast they knew not well.

*It being but early.* Note the extra syllable in the second foot. An extra syllable in the line is very rare with Morris.

*And now . . . sea.* Note the very light, unimpeded effect of a line containing words unshaded by accented and unaccented syllables. It is fluid. Find other examples—they are myriad.

Then o'er their hearts a melancholy fell,  
And they began to think they might forget  
The quest whereon their hearts had once been set,  
Now half accomplished, and all wealth and fame,  
All memory of the land wherefrom they came,  
Their very names indeed, to wander on,  
Unseen, unheard of till their lives were done.

In such-like thoughts they anchored for the  
night,  
Nor slept they much, still wishing for daylight.

Then dawned the day ; but like another night  
Unto their wearied eyes it seemed to be,  
Amid that solitude, where tree joined tree  
For ever, as it seemed ; and natheless, they  
Ran out the oars and gat them on their way  
Against the ebb, and little help the flood  
Gave them that day ; but yet for bad or good  
They laboured on, though still with less intent  
More hopeless past the changeless woods they went.

But every day, more and more sluggishly  
And shorter time, the water from the sea  
Ran up, and failed ere eve of the third day,  
Though slower took the downward stream its way,  
Grown wide and dull, and here and there the wood  
Would draw away and leave some dismal rood  
Of quaggy land about the river's edge,  
Where 'mid the oozes and decaying sedge  
There wallowed ugly nameless dull-scaled things.

But swifter the next day the river ran  
With higher banks, and now the woods began  
To be of trees that in their land they knew,  
And into clumps of close-set beeches grew,  
And oak-trees thinly spread, and there-between  
Fair upland hillocks well beset with green ;  
And 'neath the trees great herds of deer and neat,  
And sheep, and swine, fed on the herbage sweet.

So seeing now these beasts in such plenty,  
 It seemed good unto the Minyæ  
 To make provi-sion thereof for their need.  
 So drawing Argo up through sedge and reed,  
 They made her fast, while divers took the land.

And forth they set, and none of them had lack  
 Of spear or bow, or quiver at the back,  
 As through the land they went with wary mirth,  
 For they rejoiced once more to feel the earth  
 Beneath their feet, while on their heads fell down  
 The uncupped acorn, and the long leaves brown,  
 For on that land the sad mid-autumn lay,  
 And earlier came the sunset day by day.

But now unto their hunting gave they heed,  
 And of the more part happy was the speed,  
 And soon to Argo did they turn again,  
 Laden with that they had set forth to gain,  
 Of deer and beasts the slaughtered carcasses  
 Upborne on interwoven boughs of trees.  
 But, day being fully come, they loosed from shore,  
 And 'gainst the stream all bent unto the oar.  
 All day they toiled, and every mile of way  
 Still swifter grew the stream, so on that day  
 Few leagues they made ; and still the banks were fair,  
 But rising into scarped cliffs here and there.  
 Till sleep fell on them, and the watch alone  
 Waked in that place, and heard the distant moan  
 Grow louder as the dead night stiller grew,  
 And fuller of all fear, till daylight drew  
 A faint wan streak between the thinner trees,  
 And in their yellowing foliage the breeze  
 Made a new sound, that through their waking dream  
 Like to the surging sea well-nigh did seem.

But the full day being come, all men awake,  
 Fresh hold upon the oars began to take,

*Plenty, Minyæ.* Note the forced rhyme. Can you find another  
 example ?  
*Distant moan,* Of a fall on the river.



Stemming the stream, that now at every mile  
Swifter and shallower ran, and in a while  
Above all noises did they hear that roar,  
And saw the floating foam borne past the shore ;  
So but ten leagues they made upon that day,  
And on the morrow, going on their way,  
They went not far, for underneath their keel  
Some once or twice the hard rock did they feel,  
And looking on ahead, the stream could see  
White with the rapids : therefore warily  
Some mile or two they went at a slow pace  
And stayed their course where they beheld a place  
Soft-sloping to the river ; and there all,  
Half deafened by the noises of the fall  
And bickering rapids, left the ashen oar,  
And spreading over the well-wooded shore  
Cut rollers, laying on full many a stroke,  
And made a capstan of a mighty oak,  
And so drew Argo up, with hale and how,  
On to the grass, turned half to mire now.

Thence did they toil their best, in drawing her  
Beyond the falls, whereto being come anear,  
They trembled when they saw them ; for from sight  
The rocks were hidden by the spray-clouds white,  
Cold, wretched, chilling, and the mighty sound  
Their heavy-laden hearts did sore confound ;  
For parted from all men they seemed, and far  
From all the world, shut out by that great bar.

Moreover, when with toil and pain, at last  
Unto the torrent's head they now had passed,  
They sent forth swift *Ætalides* to see  
What farther up the river there might be.  
Who going twenty leagues, another fall  
Found, with great cliffs on each side, like a wall,  
But 'twixt the two, another unbarred stream .  
Joined the main river ; therefore did they deem,

*Bickering, Brawling.  
Hale and how, The hauling cry.*

When this they heard, that they perforce must try  
 This smoother branch ; so somewhat heavily  
 Argo they launched again, and gat them forth  
 Still onward toward the winter and the north.

## BOOK XI

NATHELESS, for two days did they speed along,  
 Not toiling aught, and cheered with tale and song ;  
 But the third noonday, bringing them anear  
 The mountains, turned to certain grief their fear ;  
 For now they saw the stream grown swift but deep  
 Come from a cavern in the mountain steep.

Then 'mid the downcast men did Jason stand,  
 And lifting up his voice, said : " Minyæ,  
 Why right and left upon this plain look ye,  
 Where dwell but beasts or beast-like men alone ?  
 Look rather to that heap of rugged stone,  
 Pierced with the road that leadeth to the north.  
 Yea, if from very hell this stream runs forth,  
 Let us go thither, bearing in our hands  
 This golden hard-won marvel of all lands.  
 Yet, since not death it bears, but living things,  
 Shall we not reach thereby the sea that rings  
 The whole world round, and so make shift to reach  
 Sunny Eubœa, and fair Argo beach  
 Before Iolchos, having lost no whit  
 Of all our gains ? Or else here must we sit  
 Till hunger slays us on some evil day,  
 Or wander till our raiment falls away."

So spake he, setting courage in their hearts  
 To try the unknown dark, and to their parts  
 All gat them swiftly, and they struck the mast,  
 And, deftly steered, from out the sunlight passed

*Eubœa*, The largest island in the Ægean, opposite the gulf on which  
 stands Iolchos.

Into the cold bat-haunted cavern low,  
And, thrusting out with poles, made shift to go  
Against the stream, that with a hollow sound  
Smote Argo's stem. Then Jason, looking round,  
Trembled himself, for now, indeed, he thought,  
Though to the toiling heroes he said nought :

"What do we, if this cavern narrows now,  
Or over falls these burrowing waters flow,  
And drive us back again into the sun,  
Cursing the day this quest was first begun,  
Or somewhat traps us here, as well it may,  
And ends us all, far from the light of day ? "

Therewith he bade them light the torches up,  
And to the mountain Gods to pour a cup,  
And one unto the river Gods, and pray,  
That they might come into the light of day,  
When they had pierced the mountain through and  
through.

So from the torches trains of sparkles flew,  
And strangely flashed their arms in that dark place,  
And white and haggard showed each anxious face  
Against those dripping walls of unknown stone.

But now in Jason's hand the cup outshone,  
Full of red wine, pressed by the Grecian sea,  
And lifting high his hand, he cried : " Oh ye,  
Both Gods and nymphs who in this wild land  
dwell,

In hill or river, henceforth may ye tell  
How through your midst have passed the Minyæ ;  
And if, ye helping, the cold northern sea  
We safely reach, and our desired home,  
Thither the fame and fear of you shall come,  
And there a golden-pillared house shall stand,  
Unto our helpers in this savage land.  
Nor when we reach the other side of this  
Grim cavern, due observance shall ye miss,  
For whatso on the teeming plain we snare,  
Slain with due rites shall smoke before you there."

So spake he, and twice poured the fragrant wine ;  
But they, well-pleased to have the gift divine,  
And noting well his promises, took heed  
Unto his prayers, and gave the heroes speed.  
Then Jason straightway bade more torches light,  
And Argo pushed along, flared through the night  
Of the dank cavern, and the dull place rang  
With Grecian names, as loud the heroes sang,  
For hope had come into their hearts at last.

So through the winding cave three days they passed.  
But on the fourth day Lynceus gave a cry,  
Smiting his palms together, who could spy,  
Far off, a little white speck through the dark,  
As when the 'lated traveller sees the spark,  
Of some fair-lighted homestead glitter bright,  
But soon to all men's eyes the joyous sight  
Showed clear, and with redoubled force they pushed  
Swift Argo forth, who through the water rushed  
As though she longed for daylight too and air.  
And so within an hour they brought her there,  
And on the outer world the sun shone high,  
For it was noon ; so mooring presently,  
On the green earth they clean forgot their pain,  
For joy to feel the sweet soft grass again.

And there for joy about their heads they twined  
The yellow autumn flowers of the field,  
And of untimely sorrow were they healed  
By godlike conquering wine ; nor yet forgot  
Their promise to the Gods, but on that spot,  
Of turf and stones they built up altars twain,  
And sent the hunters forth, and not in vain ;  
For Atalanta, swifter than a man,  
Arcas, and mighty Theseus, overran  
A white high-crested bull, and tough cords threw  
About his horns, and so by main force drew  
The great beast to the altars, where the knife  
Of wise Asclepius ended his hot life.  
And there they feasted far into the night.

BUT when their toil the next returning light  
Brought back to them, they gat unto the oar,  
While Jason anxiously scanned either shore.

Full many a league upon that day they made,  
And the next day the long oars down they laid,  
For at their back the steady south-west blew,  
And low anigh their heads the rain-clouds flew ;  
Therefore they hoisted up their sail to it,  
And idle by the useless oars did sit,  
Watching the long wave from their swift sea-plough  
Sweep up the low green bank, for soothly now,  
A pebble ill-thrown by a stripling's hand  
From Argo's deck had lighted on the land ;  
And yet far inland still they seemed to be,  
Nor noted aught to tell them of the sea.

(Then Argus, in a dream, learnt from the messenger Iris that the Argonauts must cross overland from the south-flowing river they had ascended to the north-flowing Vistula, and bear Argo with them on a wheeled platform. A rainbow at dawn betokening the truth of the dream, they mounted their beloved ship on a stage that took twenty days to build, in which time they dressed themselves, against the winter cold, in the skins of animals. Yet now they knew not what course to steer.

Again Iris came to the rescue. She appeared to Argus hunting in the woods, and directed him the way they should go. In camp he passed the word on to Jason.)

So at the cables toiled all men that day  
In bands of twenty, and strong shoulders bore  
The unused yoke, and laboured very sore.

But neither was the heavenly word in vain,  
For as the yew-clad hill they drew anear  
The grey-eyed keen Messenian could see clear,  
From the bare top of a great ashen-tree,  
The river running to the northern sea,

*Had lighted, Would have alighted.*

*Messenian, Lynceus, son of the king of Messene in the Peloponnesus.*

Showing all dull and heavy 'gainst the snow ;  
And when the joyful tidings they did know,  
Light grew their hearts indeed, and scarcely less  
They joyed than he who, lying all helpless  
In dreary prison, sees his door ope wide  
And half forgotten friends stand by his side.

So on the tenth day through the pass they drew  
Their strange ship-laden wain, and came unto  
A deep dark river, their long-promised road ;  
Then from the car they slipped its heavy load,  
And when safe in the stream the keel had slid,  
They with strong axes their own work undid,  
And to the Goddess a great altar made  
Of planks and beams foursquare and thereon laid  
A white wild bull, and barley cakes, and spice,  
Not sparing gold and goodly things of price ;  
And fire being set thereto, and all things done  
That they should do, by a faint mid-day sun,  
Seaward they turned, and some along the shore  
With lightened hearts the hempen tow-ropes bore,  
And some on Argo's deck abode their turn.

Now the next day the great oak-wood they reached,  
And as the Goddess bade them, there they beached  
Their sea-beat ship, on which from side to side  
They built a roof against the snowy tide,  
And round about her, huts wherein to dwell,  
When on their heads the full mid-winter fell,  
And round the camp a wooden wall they made,  
That by no men or beasts they might be frayed.  
Meanwhile the frost increased, and the thin snow  
From off the iron ground the wind did blow,  
And in the cold dark stream, from either bank  
The ice stretched forth ; but by night and day,  
By firelight passed the snowy time away,  
Forgetting not their fathers, or the time  
When all the world still dwelt in equal clime,

But each to each amid the wine-cups told  
Unwritten, half-forgotten tales of old.

## BOOK XII

TEN weeks they bode there, longing for the spring,  
And to the hearts of some the thought would cling  
That thus they should be till their lives were past,  
And into hopeless bonds that land was cast ;  
But on a day the wind, that rose at noon,  
Died not at night, and the white, sharp-edged moon,  
Just as the west had given it to sight,  
Was hidden from the watchers of the night  
By fleecy clouds, and the next dawn of day  
Broke o'er the Minyæ colourless and grey,  
With gusts of fitful wind 'twixt south and east,  
That with the day grew steadier and increased,  
Until a south-west gale blew o'er the snow,  
And northward drove the steel-blue clouds and low.

Now in few days the sun shone out again,  
The waters drew from off the flooded plain,  
And all was bright and soft as it might be,  
Though bank-high rolled the river to the sea,  
Made perilous with trees and heavy drift ;  
Natheless on rollers Argo did they lift,  
And drew her toward the stream in spite of all  
The ills they saw, and chances that might fall ;  
And there they launched her, being now most fain  
Once more to try the green and shifting plain.

Therefore with joy they shouted, when once more  
They felt great Argo move, and saw the shore  
Keep changing as they swept on toward the sea,  
With cheerful hearts still rowing steadily ;  
For now the ashen oars could they thrust forth  
Into the widened stream, that toward the north  
Ran swiftly, and thenceforward day by day  
Toiling, they made full many a league of way.

Nor did they see great hills on either hand,  
When they had fairly passed the woody land  
Where they abode the winter ; neither heard  
The sound of falls to make their hearts afraid,  
But through great woods the gentle river ran,  
And plains where fed the herds unowned of man.

So through all this the wearied Minyæ  
Were drawing nigh unto the northern sea,  
And marshier grew the plain as on they went,  
And eastward the still-widening river bent,  
Until one day at eve, with chilling rain,  
The north wind blew across the marshy plain  
Most cold and bitter, but to them as sweet  
As the rose-scented zephyr those do meet  
Who near the happy islands of the blest ;  
For as upon their eager brows it pressed,  
They sniffed withal the odour of the sea,  
And going on a mile, they seemed to be  
Within some eddy rippling languidly,  
And when the stream they tasted that went by  
Their shielded bulwark, better was the draught  
Than any wine o'er which a king has laughed,  
For still it savoured of the bitter sea.

So fell the night, and next day joyously  
They met the full flood, whose first toppling wave  
Against the sturdy prow of Argo drave,  
And with good heart, as 'midst the sweeping oars  
It tossed and foamed, and swept the muddy shores,  
They toiled, and felt no weariness that day,  
But though right well they gat them on their way,  
They failed ere dark the open sea to reach ;  
But in the night the murmur of the beach,  
Tormented by the changeful dashing seas,  
Came to their ears upon the fitful breeze.  
Then sore they longed for dawn, and when it broke  
Again the waters foamed beneath their stroke,

*Drave.* Why is it more telling here than "drove" ?



Till they had gained that river's utmost reach,  
Which from the sea by a low sandy beach  
Was guarded well, all but a little space,  
Through which now rushed, in headlong, foaming  
race,

The huddled waters of the flowing tide.  
So there the Minyæ thought it good to bide  
And wait the ebb, dreading some hidden bank.

But as they waited thus, with hearts that burned  
To try the sea, the tide grew high and turned,  
And seaward through the deepened channel ran  
In gentle ripple 'gainst the breakers wan.  
Then thither gat the joyous Minyæ  
And shouting, drave out Argo to the sea.

(Then passed they through the straits from the Baltic  
Sea into the open ocean, and all might then have been  
well with them; but a south-east gale arising, Argo  
lost sight of land, and the heroes began to fear lest they  
should pass into a drear northern ocean,

"Beyond the circling sea that rings the world,  
And down a bottomless abyss be hurled."

At length, through the intervention of Medea, the wind  
changed about, and they joyfully ran out the oars and  
hoisted sail )

They toward the south with good hearts 'gan to go,  
While still they felt the favouring north wind blow,  
And the third day again they saw the land,  
That in white cliffs rose up on the right hand;  
Coasting whereby, they came into a strait,  
Or so they deemed, for as the day grew late,  
Beneath a frosty light-blue sky and cold  
Another country could they now behold

*White cliffs, Of Dover.* They coast along to the Cornish peninsula.  
Note the utterly amorphous construction of the sentence, that  
reads as if undominated by any particular clause or clauses.  
This style carries one easily along, if dreamily.  
As, Because

Dim o'er the glittering sea ; but in the night  
 They by the moon past the high cliff and white  
 Ceased not to sail, and lost the other shore  
 When the day broke, nor saw it any more,  
 As the first land they coasted, that changed oft  
 From those high cliffs to meadows green and soft,  
 And then to other cliffs, some red, some grey,  
 Till all the land at noon of the fourth day  
 They left astern, sailing where fate might lead,  
 Of sun or stars scarce taking any heed :  
 Such courage in their hearts the White-armed set,  
 Since, clad in gold, was Pelias living yet.

But to the Gods now did they sacrifice  
 As seafarers may do, and things of price  
 Gave to the tumbling billows of the sea,  
 That for their lives still cried out hungrily ;  
 And though for many days they saw no shore,  
 Yet fainted not their hearts as heretofore,  
 For as along the pathless plain they went,  
 The white-foot messenger the Goddess sent,  
 Who unseen whispered in the helmsman's ear,  
 And taught him how the goodly ship to steer ;  
 And on a time it eluded as the day broke,  
 And to their life the longing Minyæ woke,  
 Across the risen sun the west wind blew  
 A thin light rain, that He, just shining through,  
 Showed to them all the many-coloured sign ;  
 Then to the Goddess did they pour out wine,  
 Right glad at heart ; but she the livelong day  
 By Argo's prow flew o'er the shifting way  
 Unseen of all, and turned them still to land ;  
 And as they went the Thracian's cunning hand  
 Stole o'er the harp-strings till Arion's steeds

*The White-armed, Juno.*  
*He, The sun.*

*Arion's steeds, Dolphins.* *The Goddess, Juno, who sends Iris.*  
*Many-coloured sign, The rainbow.*  
 Sailors tried to kill and rob Arion, a poet  
 of the sixth century B.C., while he was at sea ; he jumped  
 overboard, and a dolphin bore him on its back to land.

Gat them from 'twixt the tangled water-weeds,  
And lifted listening heads above the sea,  
And sea-birds, pensive with the harmony,  
About the mast, above the singer hung,  
With quivering wings, as from full heart he sung :

“ O death, that maketh life so sweet,  
O fear, with mirth before thy feet,  
What have ye yet in store for us,  
The conquerors, the glorious ?

“ Men say : ‘ For fear that thou shouldst die  
To-morrow, let to-day pass by  
Flower-crowned and singing ; ’ yet have we  
Passed our to-day upon the sea,  
Or in a poisonous unknown land,  
With fear and death on either hand,  
And listless when the day was done  
Have scarcely hoped to see the sun  
Dawn on the morrow of the earth,  
Nor in our hearts have thought of mirth.  
And while the world lasts, scarce again  
Shall any sons of men bear pain  
Like we have borne, yet be alive.

“ So surely not in vain we strive  
Like other men for our reward ;  
Sweet peace and deep, the chequered sward  
Beneath the ancient mulberry-trees,  
The smooth-paved gilded palaces,  
Where the shy thin-clad damsels sweet  
Make music with their gold-ringed feet.  
The fountain court amidst of it,  
Where the short-haired slave maidens sit,  
While on the veined pavement lie  
The honied things and spicery  
Their arms have borne from out the town.

“ The merchant-town’s fair market-place,  
Where over many a changing face  
The pigeons of the temple flit,

And still the outland merchants sit  
Like kings above *their merchandise*,  
Lying to foolish men and wise.

" Ah ! if they heard that we were come  
Into the bay, and bringing home  
That which all men have talked about,  
Some men with rage, and some with doubt,  
Some with desire, some with praise ;  
Then would the people throng the ways,  
Nor heed the outland merchandise,  
Nor any talk, from fools or wise,  
But tales of our accomplished quest.

" What soul within the house shall rest  
When we come home ? The wily king  
Shall leave his throne to see the thing ;  
No man shall keep the landward gate,  
The hurried traveller shall wait  
Until our bulwarks graze the quay,  
Unslain the milk-white bull shall be  
Beside the quivering altar-flame ;  
Scarce shall the maiden clasp for shame  
Over her breast the raiment thin  
The morn that Argo cometh in.

" Then cometh happy life again  
That payeth well our toil and pain  
In that sweet hour, when all our woe  
But as a pensive tale we know,  
Nor yet remember deadly fear ;  
For surely now if death be near,  
Unthought of is it, and unseen  
When sweet is, that hath bitter been."

So sung the Thracian, and the rowing-folk  
Sent Argo quivering with the well-timed stroke  
Over the green hills, through great clouds of spray,  
And as they went upon their happy way

About the deck the longing men would stand  
With wistful eyes still gazing for the land ;  
Which yet they saw not, till the cool fresh night  
Had come upon them, with no lack of light,  
For moon and stars shone brightly overhead,  
Nor through the night did Iris fail to lead  
The wave-tossed Argo o'er the glittering sea.

So as the moon set, did there seem to be  
Upon their larboard, banks of high-piled cloud,  
Which from their sight the last dark hour did shroud.  
Then came the twilight, and those watchers fain  
Against the eastern light beheld again  
The clouds unchanged, and as the daylight grew,  
Lynceus cried out : " Some land we draw unto !  
Look forth, Erginus, on these mountains grey,  
If thou, perchance, hast seen them ere to-day "

Therewith all turned about, and some men ran  
To hear what words the God-begotten man  
Would say, who answered : " Lynceus, and all ye,  
Most surely now I see the Iberian land  
That 'gainst the shore of Africa doth stand,  
To break these mighty billows, ever pressed  
Each against each from out the landless west."

So with glad hearts all men his bidding did,  
And swiftly through the water Argo slid,  
Till as the sun rose were they near the strait,  
At whose mouth but a little did they wait  
Till they had eaten, pouring honied wine  
Unto the Gods, then bidding no new sign,  
They cried aloud, and running out the oars,  
They swept great Argo midmost 'twixt the shores  
Of either land, and as her gilded prow  
Cleft the new waters, clean forgotten now  
Grew all the wasteful washing of the main,  
And clean forgotten the dull hopeless pain,

*Larboard, Port side ; left.  
Iberian land, Spain.*

*God-begotten, Son of Neptune.  
Strait, Of Gibraltar.*

In the great swirling river left so long,  
And in all hearts the memory was strong  
Of the bright Grecian headlands and the bay  
They left astern upon a glorious day.

## BOOK XIII

THREE days they sailed, and passed on the third day  
A rock-bound coast upon their left that lay,  
But on the morrow eve made land again,  
Stretched right ahead across the watery plain,  
Whereto ere nightfall did they draw ancor,  
And so lay-to till dawn with little fear ;  
For from the shore a light, soft land-wind blew.

But as the dead night round about them drew,  
The ceaseless roar of savage beasts they heard,  
Mingled with sounds like cries of men afeard,  
And blare of horns, and clank of heavy chains,  
And noise of bells, such as in moonlit lanes  
Rings from the grey team on the market-night.

And with these noises did they see a light,  
That seemed to light some crown of palaces,  
Shining from out a grove of thick-set trees.  
Then did the Minyæ doubt if they were come  
Unto some great king's well-adornèd home,  
Or if some temple of a God were there,  
Or if, indeed, the spirits of the air  
Haunted that place : so slowly passed away  
The sleepless night, and at the dawn of day  
Their longing eyes beheld a lovely land,  
Green meadows rising o'er a yellow strand,  
Well-set with fair fruit-bearing trees, and groves  
Of thick-leaved elms all populous of doves,

*The bay, The Gulf of Pagasæ.*

*A rock-bound coast, Probably south Sardinia.*

*Made land, Italy.*

And watered by a wandering clear green stream ;  
And through the trees they saw a palace gleam  
Of polished marble, fair beyond man's thought.

There, as they lay, the sweetest scents were brought  
By sighing winds across the bitter sea,  
And languid music breathed melodiously,  
Steeping their souls in such unmixed delight,  
That hearts were melted, and all dim of sight  
They grew, and scarce their hands could grip the oar,  
And as they slowly neared the happy shore  
The young men well-nigh wept, and e'en the wise  
Thought they had reached the gate of Paradise.

But 'midst them stood Medea, and thoughtfully  
Gazed landward o'er the ripple of the sea,  
And said no word, till from her precious things  
She drew a casket full of chains and rings,  
And took therefrom a chaplet brown and sere,  
And set it on her head : and now being near  
The yellow strand, high on the poop she stood,  
And said : " O heroes, what has chilled your blood,  
That in such wise ye gaze upon this land  
With tearful eye, and nerveless, languid hand,  
And heaving breast, and measureless desire ?  
Be wise, for here the never-dying fire,  
The God-begotten wonder, Circe, lights,  
The wise of women, framer of delights  
That being of man once felt, he ne'er shall cease  
To long for vainly, as the years increase  
On his dulled soul, shut in some bestial form.

" And good it had been that some bitter storm  
Were tossing Argo's planks from sea to sea,  
Than ye had reached this fair land, but for me,  
Who amid tears and prayers, and nameless pain,

*And watered . . . clear green stream.* Note the onomatopœia, and the Pre-Raphaelite effect of primary colour. Note also the cunning use of vowel-change.

*Chaplet sere,* Withered wreath of leaves.

*Tearful eye . . . desire.* Example of climax.

*Circe,* A sorceress who lived on the island of *Æea*.

Some little wisdom have made shift to gain :  
 Look forth upon the green shore, and behold  
 Those many beasts, all collared with fine gold,  
 Lions and pards, and small-eyed restless bears,  
 And tuskéd boars, who from uneasy hairs  
 Are just come forth : nor is there 'mongst them one  
 But once walked upright underneath the sun,  
 And had the name of man : such shall ye be,  
 If from the ship ye wander heedlessly,  
 But safely I my kinswoman may meet,  
 And learn from her the bitter and the sweet  
 That waits us ere ye come to Greece again,  
 And see the wind-swept green Thessalian plain.

" Meanwhile, let nothing tempt you to the land,  
 Nor unto anything stretch forth the hand  
 That comes from shore, for all ye may see there  
 Are but lost men and their undoers fair."

But with that word they furrowed the wet sand,  
 And straight they ran the gangway out to land,  
 O'er which, with girded raiment, passed the queen ;  
 But now another marvel was there seen,  
 For to the shore, from many a glade and lawn,  
 The golden-collared sad-eyed beasts were drawn  
 In close-set ranks above the sea-beat shore.  
 And open-mouthed, with varying moan and roar,  
 White-foot Medea did they seem to threat ;  
 Whereat the Minyæ on their bow-strings set  
 The notches of their arrows, but the maid  
 Turned round about, with calm face unafraid  
 And said : " O Minyæ, lay your weapons down,  
 Nor fear for me ; behold this chaplet brown,  
 Whose withered leaves rest lightly on my head,  
 This is the herb that Gods and mortals dread,  
 The Pontic Moly, the unchanging charm."

*Kinswoman*, Circe was sister to Æetes.

*Pontic Moly*, A fabulous magic herb with white flower and black root. In Homer, Ulysses protected himself with moly from the charms of Circe. Pontus, a country bordering the Black Sea.



Then up the beach she passed, and her white arm  
This way and that the leopards thrust aside,  
And 'mid the grisly swine her limbs did glide ;  
And on a lion's mane her hand she laid ;  
But still with moans they thronged about the maid,  
As she passed onward to the palace white,  
Until the elm-groves hid her from the sight.

Then they with fearful hearts did sacrifice  
Unto the Gods in their seafaring wise.  
Meanwhile Medea through the thick-leaved grove  
Passed underneath the moaning of the dove,  
Not left by those strange beasts ; until at last  
Her feet from off the sparse long grasses passed  
Unto a sunny space of daisied sward,  
From which a strange-wrought silver grate did guard  
A lovely pleasance, set with flowers, foursquare,  
On three sides ending in a cloister fair  
That hid the fair feet of a marble house,  
Carved thick with flowers and stories amorous.

So there Medea stayed a little space,  
Gazing in wonder through the silver rail  
That fenced that garden from the wooded vale ;  
For damsels wandered there in languid wise  
As though they wearied of that Paradise,  
Their jewelled raiment dragging from its stalk  
The harmless daisy in their listless walk.  
The men entrapped, Medea saw them lead  
Into the dark, cool cloister, whence again  
They came not forth, but four-foot, rough of mane,  
Uncouth with spots, and dangerous of claw.

But when the sad-eyed beasts about her saw  
These draw towards them, and beheld the gate  
Open and shut, and fellows to that state  
New come, they whined, and brushing round her feet,  
Prayed for return unto that garden sweet,  
Their own undoing once that yet shall be  
Death unto many a toiler of the sea,

*Pleasance*, Pleasure-ground attached to a mansion.

Because all these outside the silver gate  
Were men indeed, though inarticulate,  
And, spite of seeming, in none otherwise,  
Did longing torture them, than when in guise  
Of men they stood before that garden green,  
And first their eyes the baneful place had seen.

But now the queen grew wrath, for in her way,  
Before the gate a yellow lion lay,  
A tiger-cat her raiment brushed aside,  
And o'er her feet she felt a serpent glide,  
The swine screamed loud about her, and a pard  
Her shining shoulder of her raiment bared  
With light swift clutch ; then she from off her head  
Took the sere moly wreath, and therewith said :  
" What do ye, wretches ? know ye not this sign,  
That whoso wears is as a thing divine ?  
Get from this place, for never more can ye  
Become partakers of the majesty  
That from man's soul looks through his eager eyes.  
Go—wail that ever ye were made so wise  
As men are made ; who chase through smooth and  
rough  
Their own undoing, nor can have enough  
Of bitter trouble, and entangling woe."

Then slowly from her did those monsters go,  
In varied voices mourning for their lot  
And that sweet poison ne'er to be forgot.

But straight with serious face the Colchian maid  
Her slender fingers on the latchet laid  
That held the silver gate, and entered in ;  
And through the darkling corridor she passed  
And reached a huge adorned hall at last,  
Where sat alone the deathless sorceress,  
Upon whose knees an open book did press,  
Wherein strange things the Gods knew not she read ;  
A golden vine-bough wreathed her golden head.

Smiling, she put the wondrous book away  
As the light footsteps fell upon her ear,

She raised her head, and when the queen drew near,  
She said: "O wanderer from sea to sea,  
I greet thee well, and dear thou art to me:  
But since indeed the Fates will have it so,  
Take heed thou dost the things I bid thee do.  
And first, since thou wouldst have me purify  
Your hands of his blood that thou sawest die  
'Twixt yellow Phasis and the green-ridged sea,  
Behold, this is not possible to me,  
Nor ever must another altar stand  
In this green nook of the Italian land,  
To aught but me, no, not unto my Sire;  
But unto him shall ye light ruddy fire,  
When, drawing nigh to your desired home,  
Unto the headland of Malea ye come;  
And then, indeed, I bid ye not to spare  
Spices and golden things and raiment fair,  
But to the country folk give things of price,  
And from them take wherewith to sacrifice,  
A hundred milk-white bulls, a hundred kine,  
And many a jar of unmixed, honied wine,  
And, crowned with olive, round the altars sing  
Unto the God who gladdens everything,  
Thy father's father, the all-seeing Sun.  
And then the deed thy Jason's spear has done  
Mayst thou forget, it shall not visit thee.  
Moreover, sailing hence across the sea,  
A waste of yellow sand shall ye pass by  
'Neath the Trinacrian cliffs, whereon shall lie  
Fair women, fairer than thine eyes have seen,  
And if thou still wouldst be a Grecian queen,  
When to that deadly place ye draw anear,  
And sweetest music ye begin to hear,  
Bid your bold love steer Argo from the land,  
While Thracian Orpheus takes his harp in hand,

*My Sire, Apollo, god of the sun.  
Trinacrian, Sicilian.*

And sings thereto some God-delighting strain,  
And surely else shall all your toil be vain,  
For deadlier than my gardens are those sands.

" But, doing as I bid, Makea reach,  
And after, nigh Iolchos Argo beach.  
Yet at the city haste ye not to land,  
For still the sceptre presses Pelias' hand,  
And Æson is at rest for evermore ;  
Bid then thy folk lurk by some wooded shore,  
And to the white-walled city straightly wend  
Thyself alone, and safely there make end  
Of the king's life ; nor need I teach thee how,  
For deep unfailing wiles thy soul doth know."

So said she, and thereat the Colchian maid  
Turned from her fair face shuddering and afraid,  
With beating heart, and flushed face like the rose  
That in the garden of Damascus grows,  
And catching up her raiment, hurried through  
The mighty hall, where thick the pillars blue  
Stood like a dream to hold the roof aloft.

Then, the grove passed, she made good speed to  
reach  
The edges of the sea, the wind-swept beach ;  
But as she ran, afar the heroes saw  
Her raiment fluttering, and made haste to draw  
Their two-edged swords, and their strong bows to  
string,  
Doubting that she was chased of some dread thing ;  
And Jason leapt ashore, and toward her ran,  
And with him went the arrow-loving man,  
The wise Arcadian, and the Minyæ  
Got ready shielded Argo for the sea.

But ere these met her, with uplifted hand,  
She cried : " Turn back, nor deeper in this land  
Thrust ye your souls ; nought chases me but fear,  
And all is well if on the sea we were ;

*The arrow-loving man, Arcas.*

Yea, if we once were free from fear and spell,  
Then, truly, better were all things than well."

Thereat they stayed, but onward still she ran  
Until she reached them, and the godlike man  
Took by the arm, and hurrying him along,  
Stayed not until their feet were set among  
The last faint ripples of the gentle sea,  
Wherefrom they boarded Argo speedily,  
And Jason bid all men unto the oar.

## BOOK XIV

Now o'er the open sea they took their way,  
For three days, and at dawning of the day,  
Upon the fourth, saw the Trinacrian shore,  
And there-along they coasted two days more.  
Then first Medea warned them to take heed,  
Lest they should end all memory of their deed  
Where dwell the Sirens on the yellow sand,  
And folk should think some tangled poisonous land  
Had buried them, or some tumultuous sea  
O'er their white bones was tossing angrily ;  
Or that some muddy river, far from Greece,  
Drove seaward o'er the ringlets of the fleece.

But now, nigh even on the second day,  
As o'er the gentle waves they took their way,  
The orange-scented land-breeze seemed to bear  
Some other sounds unto the listening ear  
Than all day long they had been hearkening,  
The land-born signs of many a well-known thing.  
Thereat Medea trembled, for she knew  
That nigh the dreadful sands at last they drew,  
For certainly the Sirens' song she heard,  
Though yet her ear could shape it to no word,  
And by their faces could the queen behold  
How sweet it was, although no tale it told,  
To those worn toilers o'er the bitter sea.

Now, as they sped along, they presently,  
Rounding a headland, reached a little bay  
Walled from the sea by splintered cliffs and grey,  
Capped by the thymy hills' green wind-beat head  
Where 'mid the whin the burrowing rabbits fed.  
And 'neath the cliff they saw a waste of sand,  
'Twixt Nereus' pasture and the high scarped land,  
Whereon, yet far off, could their eyes behold  
White bodies moving, crowned and girt with gold  
Wherefrom it seemed that lovely music welled.

So when all this the grey-eyed queen beheld,  
She said : " O Jason, I have made thee wise '  
In this and other things : turn then thine eyes  
Seaward, and note the ripple of the sea,  
Where there is hope as well as fear for thee.  
Nor look upon the death that lurketh there  
'Neath the grey cliff, though sweet it seems and fair ;  
For thou art young upon this day to die.  
Take then the helm, and gazing steadily  
Upon the road to Greece, make strong thine hand  
And steer us toward the lion-haunted land :  
And thou, O Thracian ! if thou e'er hast moved  
Men's hearts with stories of the Gods who loved,  
And men who suffered, move them on this day,  
Taking the deadly love of death away,  
That even now is stealing over them,  
While still they gaze upon the ocean's hem,  
Where their undoing is if they but knew."

But while she spake still nigher Argo drew  
Unto the yellow-edges of the shore,  
And little help she had of ashen oar,  
For as her shielded side rolled through the sea,  
Silent with glittering eyes the Minyæ  
Gazed o'er the surge, for they were nigh enow,  
Yea, nigh enow to see their red lips smile,

*Nereus, Son of Ocean ; his pasture is the sea.  
Lion-haunted land, Africa.*

Wherefrom all song had ceased now for a while,  
As though they deemed the prey was in the net,  
And they no more had need a bait to set.

A moment Jason gazed, then through the waist  
Ran swiftly, and with trembling hands made haste  
To trim the sail, then to the tiller ran,  
And thrust aside the skilled Milesian man,  
Who with half-open mouth, and dreamy eyes,  
Stood steering Argo to that land of lies ;  
But as he staggered forward, Jason's hand  
Hard on the tiller steered away from land,  
And as her head a little now fell off  
Unto the wide sea, did he shout this scoff  
To Thracian Orpheus : " Minstrel, shall we die,  
Because thou hast forgotten utterly  
What things she taught thee that men call divine ?  
Or will thy measures but lead folk to wine,  
And scented beds, and not to noble deeds ?  
Or will they fail as fail the shepherd's reeds  
Before the trumpet, when these sea-witches  
Pipe shrilly to the washing of the seas ?  
I am a man, and these but beasts, but thou  
Giving these souls, that all were men ere now,  
Shall be a very God, and not a man ! "

So spake he ; but his fingers Orpheus ran  
Over the strings, and sighing turned away  
From that fair ending of the sunny bay ;  
But as his well-skilled hands were preluding  
What his heart swelled with, they began to sing  
With pleading voices from the yellow sands,  
Clustered together, with appealing hands  
Reached out to Argo as she turned away  
While o'er their white limbs flew the flakes of spray,  
Since they spared not to set white feet among  
The cold waves heedless of their honied song.

*Milesian man, Erginus*

*She . . . that men call divine, Calliope, chief of the Muses ; mother  
of Orpheus.*

(2,868)

Sweetly they sang, and still the answer came  
 Piercing and clear from him, as bursts the flame  
 From out the furnace in the moonless night ;  
 Yet, as their words are no more known aright  
 Through lapse of many ages, and no man  
 Can any more across the waters wan  
 Behold those singing women of the sea,  
 Once more I pray you all to pardon me,  
 If with my feeble voice and harsh I sing  
 From what dim memories may chance to cling  
 About men's hearts, of lovely things once sung  
 Beside the sea, while yet the world was young.

## THE SIRENS

O happy seafarers are ye,  
 And surely all your ills are past,  
 And toil upon the land and sea,  
 Since ye are brought to us at last.

To you the fashion of the world,  
 Wide lands laid waste, fair cities burned,  
 And plagues, and kings from kingdoms hurled,  
 Are nought, since hither ye have turned.

For as upon this beach we stand,  
 And o'er our heads the sea-fowl flit,  
 Our eyes behold a glorious land,  
 And soon shall ye be kings of it.

## ORPHEUS

A little more, a little more,  
 O carriers of the Golden Fleece,  
 A little labour with the oar,  
 Before we reach the land of Greece.

*1* *pray you*, i.e. The mediæval minstrel reciting the story  
 "prays" you.



E'en now perchance faint rumours reach  
Men's ears of this our victory,  
And draw them down unto the beach  
To gaze across the empty sea.

But since the longed-for day is nigh,  
And scarce a God could stay us now,  
Why do ye hang your heads and sigh,  
And still go slower and more slow ?

## THE SIRENS

Ah, will ye go, and whither then  
Will ye go from us, soon to die,  
To fill your threescore years and ten,  
With many an unnamed misery ?

And this the wretchedest of all,  
That when upon your lonely eyes  
The last faint heaviness shall fall  
Ye shall bethink you of our cries.

Come back, nor grown old, seek in vain  
To hear us sing across the sea.  
Come back, come back, come back again,  
Come back, O fearful Minyæ !

## ORPHEUS

Ah, once again, ah, once again,  
The black prow plunges through the sea,  
Nor yet shall all your toil be vain,  
Nor ye forgot, O Minyæ.

In such wise sang the Thracian, in such wise  
Out gushed the Sirens' deadly melodies ;  
But long before the mingled song was done,  
Back to the oars the Minyæ, one by one,

Slunk silently ; though many an one sighed sore,  
 As his strong fingers met the wood once more,  
 And from his breast the toilsome breathing came.

But as they laboured, some for very shame  
 Hung down their heads, and yet amongst them some  
 Gazed at the place whence that sweet song had come ;  
 But round the oars and Argo's shielded side  
 The sea grew white, and she began to glide  
 Swift through the waters of that deadly bay ;  
 But when a long wake now behind her lay,  
 And still the whistle of the wind increased,  
 Past shroud and mast, and all the song had ceased,  
 Butes rose up, the fair Athenian man,  
 And with wild eyes betwixt the rowers ran  
 Unto the poop and leapt into the sea ;  
 Then all men rested on their oars, but he  
 Rose to the top, and towards the shore swam fast ;  
 While all eyes watched him, who had well-nigh past  
 The place where sand and water 'gan to meet  
 In wreaths and ripples round the ivory feet,  
 When sunburnt swimmer, snow-white glancing limb,  
 And yellow sand unto their eyes grew dim,  
 Nor did they see their fellow any more.

But toward the south a little now they bent,  
 And for a while o'er landless sea they went,  
 But on the third day made another land  
 At dawn of day, and thitherward did stand ;  
 And since the wind blew lightly from the shore,  
 Somewhat abeam, they feared not with the oar  
 To push across the shallowing sea and green,  
 That washed a land the fairest they had seen,  
 Whose shell-strewn beach at highest of the tide

*Abeam*, At right angles to the length of the ship.

*A land*, North Africa. The description is of the Garden of the Hesperides, near the Atlas Mountains. The Hesperides are three nymphs who watch over the golden apples that Juno gave Jupiter on their wedding-day.

*The tide*. An error, as there is practically no tide in the Mediterranean.

'Twixt sea and flowery shore was nowise wide,  
And drawn a little backward from the sea  
There stood a marble wall wrought cunningly,  
Rosy and white, set thick with images,  
And overtopped with heavy-fruited trees,  
Which by the shore ran, as the bay did bend,  
And to their eyes had neither gap nor end ;  
Nor any gate : and looking over this,  
They saw a place not made for earthly bliss,  
Or eyes of dying men, for growing there  
The yellow apple and the painted pear,  
And well-filled golden cups of oranges  
Hung amid groves of pointed cypress trees ;  
On grassy slopes the twining vine-boughs grew.  
And hoary olives 'twixt far mountains blue,  
And many-coloured flowers, like a cloud  
The rugged southern cliffs did softly shroud ;  
And many a green-necked bird they saw alight  
Within the slim-leaved, thorny pomegranate,  
That flung its unstrung rubies on the grass,  
And slowly o'er the place the wind did pass  
Heavy with many odours that it bore  
From thymy hills down to the sea-beat shore,  
Because no flower there is, that all the year,  
From spring to autumn, beareth otherwhere,  
But there it flourished ; nor the fruit alone  
From 'twixt the green leaves and the boughs outshone,  
For there each tree was ever flowering.

Nor was there lacking many a living thing  
Changed of its nature, for the roe-deer there  
Walked fearless with the tiger ; and the bear  
Rolled sleepily upon the fruit-strewn grass,  
Letting the conies o'er his rough hide pass,

*Dying men, Mortal.*

*The yellow apple . . . grass.* Note the warm painted effect ; and the distinction of the several items chiefly by their colour, or their shape.

*Conies, Rabbits.*

With blinking eyes, that meant no treachery.  
 Careless the partridge passed the red fox by ;  
 Untouched the serpent left the thrushes brown.  
 And as a picture was the lion's frown.

But in the midst there was a grassy space,  
 Raised somewhat over all the flowery place,  
 On marble terrace-walls wrought like a dream ;  
 And round about it ran a clear blue stream,  
 Bridged o'er with marble steps, and midmost there  
 Grew a green tree, whose smooth grey boughs did  
     bear

Such fruit as never man elsewhere has seen,  
 For 'twixt the sunlight and the shadow green  
 Shone out fair apples of red gleaming gold.  
 Moreover, round the tree, in many a fold,  
 Lay coiled a dragon, glittering little less  
 Than that which his eternal watchfulness  
 Was set to guard ; nor yet was he alone,  
 For from the daisied grass about him shone  
 Gold raiment wrapping round, two damsels fair,  
 And one upon the steps combed out her hair,  
 And with shut eyes sung low as in a dream ;  
 And one stood near her in the cold blue stream.

Not long she stood, but looking seaward yet,  
 From out the water made good haste to get,  
 And catching up her raiment hastily,  
 Ran up the marble stair, and 'gan to cry :  
 " Wake, O my sisters, wake, for now are come  
 The thieves of Æa to our peaceful home."

Meanwhile, from Argo many a sea-beat face  
 Gazed longingly upon that lovely place,  
 And some their eager hands already laid  
 Upon the gangway. Then Medea said :  
 " Get back unto the oars, O Minyæ,  
 Nor loiter here, for what have such as we  
 To do herein, where, 'mid undying trees,  
 Undying watch the wise Hesperides,

And where the while they watch, scarce can a God  
Set foot upon the fruit-besprinkled sod  
That no snow ever covers ? therefore haste,  
Nor yet in wondering your fair lives waste."

She ceased, and little soothly did they grieve,  
For all its loveliness, that land to leave,  
For now some God had chilled their hardihead,  
And in their hearts had set a sacred dread,  
They knew not why ; but on their oars they  
hung,  
A little longer as the sisters sung.

" O ye, who to this place have strayed,  
That never for man's eyes was made,  
Depart in haste, as ye have come,  
And bear back to your sea-beat home  
This memory of the age of gold,  
And for your eyes, grown over-bold,  
Your hearts shall pay in sorrowing,  
For want of many a half-seen thing.

" Lo, such as is this garden green,  
In days past, all the world has been,  
And what we know all people knew,  
But this, that unto worse all grew.

" But since the golden age is gone,  
This little place is left alone,  
Unchanged, unchanging, watched of us,  
The daughters of wise Hesperus.

" Let earth and heaven go their way,  
While still we watch from day to day,  
In this green place left all alone,  
A remnant of the days long gone."

There in the wind they hung, as word by word  
The clear-voiced singers silently they heard ;  
But when the air was barren of their song,  
Anigh the shore they durst not linger long,

So northward turned forewearied Argo's head,  
 And dipping oars, from that fair country sped,  
 Fulfilled of new desires and pensive thought,  
 Which that day's life unto their hearts had brought.

Then hard they toiled upon the bitter sea,  
 And in two days they did not fail to be  
 In sight of land, a headland high and blue,  
 Which straight Milesian Erginus knew  
 To be the fateful place which now they sought,  
 Stormy Malea, so thitherward they brought  
 The groaning ship, and, casting anchor, lay  
 Beneath that headland's lee, within a bay,  
 Wherefrom the more part landed, and their feet  
 Once more the happy soil of Greece did meet.

Therewith they failed not to bring ashore  
 Rich robes of price and of fair arms good store,  
 And gold and silver, that they there might buy  
 What yet they lacked for their solemnity ;  
 Then, while upon the highest point of land  
 Some built an altar, Jason, with a band  
 Of all the chiefest of the Minyæ,  
 Turned inland from the murmur of the sea.

Not far they went ere by a little stream  
 Down in a valley they could see the gleam  
 Of brazen pillars and fair-gilded vanes,  
 And, dropping down by dank dark-wooded lanes  
 From off the hillside, reached a house at last  
 Where in and out men-slaves and women passed,  
 And guests were streaming fast into the hall,  
 Where now the oaken boards were laid for all.  
 With these the Minyæ went, and soon they were  
 Within a pillared hall both great and fair,  
 Where folk already sat beside the board,  
 And on the dais was an ancient lord.

But when these saw the fearless Minyæ

*Fulfilled of, Filled full of.*

*Fair-gilded vanes, etc.* This is a mediæval, not a Greek, touch.

Glittering in arms, they sprang up hastily,  
And each man turned about unto the wall  
To seize his spear or staff : then through the hall  
Jason cried out : " Laconians, fear ye not,  
Nor leave the flesh-meat while it yet is hot  
For dread of us, for we are men as ye,  
And I am Jason of the Minyæ,  
And come from ÆEa to the land of Greece,  
And in my ship bear back the Golden Fleece,  
And now we pray to share your wine and bread,  
And other things we need, and at our hands  
That ye will take fair things of many lands."  
" Sirs," said the ancient lord, " be welcome here,  
Come up and sit by me, and make such cheer  
As here ye can : glad am I that to me  
The first of Grecian men from off the sea  
Ye now are come."

So when all folk with this were satisfied,  
Back went the Minyæ to the water-side,  
And with them that old lord, fain to behold  
Victorious Argo and the Fleece of Gold.  
And so aboard amid the oars he lay  
Throughout the night, and at the dawn of day  
Did all men land, nor spared that day to wear  
The best of all they had of gold-wrought gear,  
And every one, being crowned with olive grey,  
Up to the headland did they take their way,  
Where now already stood the crownèd priests  
About the altars by the gilt-horned beasts.  
There, as the fair sun rose, did Jason break  
Over the altar the thin barley-cake,  
And cast the salt abroad, and there were slain  
The milk-white bulls, and there red wine did rain  
On to the fire from out the ancient jar,

*Laconians*, Inhabitants of Laconia, the southernmost country in  
Greece  
*Gear*, Apparel (archaic)

And high rose up the red flame, seen afar  
From many another headland of that shore,  
And through its fitful crackling and its roar,  
From time to time in pleading song and prayer,  
Swept by the wind about the summer air,  
Clear rung the voices of the Minyæ  
Unto the dashing of the conquered sea,  
That far below thrust on by tide and wind  
The crumbling bases of the headland mined.

## BOOK XV

BUT on the morrow did the Minyæ  
Turn Argo's head once more to Thessaly.  
And surely now the steersman knew his way,  
As island after island every day  
They coasted, with a soft land-wind abeam ;  
And now at last like to a troubled dream  
Seemed all the strange things they had seen erewhile,  
Now when they knew the very green sea's smile  
Beneath the rising and the setting sun,  
And their return they surely now had won  
To those familiar things long left behind,  
When on their sails hard drave the western wind.

Now at the entering of their own green bay  
There lies an island that men call to-day  
Green Cicynethus, low, and covered o'er  
With close-set trees, and distant from the shore  
But some five furlongs, and a shallow sea  
'Twixt main and island ripples languidly,  
And on the shore there dwells not any man  
For many a mile ; so there Erginus ran  
Argo disguised, and steering skilfully,  
Cast anchor with the island on his lee ;  
Hid from the straits, and there struck sail and mast ;  
Then to the island shore the heroes passed,



And with their wide war-axes 'gan to lop  
Full many a sapling with green-waving top  
And full-leaved boughs of spreading maple-trees,  
And covered Argo's seaward side with these.  
And then the shipmen did Medea bid  
To hold a shallop ready, while she hid  
Her lovely body in a rough grey gown  
And heavy home-spun mantle coarse and brown,  
And round about her a great wallet slung.

Then, all being ready, to the prince she said :  
" O well-beloved, amongst our foes I go  
Alone and weak, nor do I surely know  
If I shall live or die there ; but do thou  
Keep a watch ever, who from off the prow  
Shall look towards white Iolchos o'er the bay,  
And watching, wait until the seventh day,  
And if no sign thou hast from me by then,  
Believe me slain at hands of wicked men,  
Or shut in some dark prison at the least,  
While o'er my head thy foe holds royal feast."  
Therewith from him she turned her face divine,  
And reached the shallop over Argo's side,  
That o'er the shallows soon began to glide,  
Driven by arms of strong Eurydamas ;  
But when the keel dragged on the rank sea-grass,  
She stepped ashore, and back the hero turned  
Unto his fellows, who, with hearts that burned  
Unto the quays to bring great Argo's stem,  
And gain the glory that was waiting them,  
Watched ever for the sign across the bay,  
Till nigh the dawning of the seventh day.

But from the shore unto a thick-leaved wood  
Medea turned, drawing both cloak and hood  
Right close about her, lest perchance some man,  
Some hind, or fisher of the water wan,

*Hind, Farm-hand.*

Should wonder at her visage, that indeed  
Seemed little worthy of that wretched weed.

(Having entered the wood, she anointed herself with a magic liquor, pale green of hue. And lo ! on her way to Iolchos, a fearful change came over her : she became a withered old hag. Wearied out, and sitting down beside a fountain, she was accosted by an ancient crone, come for water, who asked her what she was.

Medea told her she had come thither from a northern land, where she had learnt how by magic art to make an old man young again. The crone thereupon advised her to carry the story next day to the daughter of old King Pelias.)

" I thank thee, mother," said the Colchian maid,  
" Nor of kings' daughters shall I be afraid."

(As she led Medea to the palace, the crone told her how Pelias, believing the Argonauts perished, had slain old Æson, " with all his house who at Iolchos were.")

With that they came unto the royal house  
Where Pelias dwelt, grown old and timorous,  
Oppressed with blood of those that he had slain,  
Desiring wealth and longer life in vain.

So there a court low-built the old crone sought,  
And to her lodging the tired Colchian brought,  
Where she might sleep, and gave her food and drink,  
Then into sleep did wise Medea sink.

At length she woke, and felt the morning air  
Cold on her face, because the ancient crone  
Over her couch the casement had undone.

And as she oped her eyes, she heard her say :

" Awake, O guest, for yet another day  
We twain must bear before we gain our rest.  
But now indeed I think it to be best  
That to my ladies I alone should show  
What prayers, and rites, and wonders thou dost  
know,

Which thou wilt tell for gold ; for sure I deem  
That to us dying folk nought good doth seem,  
But hoarding for the years we shall not see  
So bide thou there, and I will come to thee  
And bring thee word of what the queens may say."

Then with these words she went upon her way,  
While in her place alone Medea sat,  
With eager heart, thinking of this or that,  
And wishing that the glorious day were come,  
When she should set her love within his home,  
A king once more. So 'mid these thoughts, there came  
Back to the place the wise Thessalian dame,  
Who bade her rise, and after her to go,  
That she those marvels to the queens might show.

Therewith she brought her to a chamber where  
Abode the royal maidens slim and fair,  
All doing well-remembered works ; of whom  
White-armed Alcestis sat before the loom,  
Casting the shuttle swift from hand to hand,  
The while Eradne's part it was to stand  
Amongst the maids who carded out the wool  
And filled the gleaming ivory shuttles full.  
Amphinome, meantime, her golden head  
Bent o'er the spinners of the milk-white thread,  
And by the growing web still set aside  
The many-coloured bundles newly dyed,  
Blood-red, and heavenly blue, and grassy green,  
Yea, and more colours than man yet has seen  
In flowery meadows midmost of the May.

Then to the royal maids the crone 'gan say :  
" Behold the woman, O my mistresses,  
Who 'midst the close-set gloomy northern trees

*Alcestis.* She later married Admetus, King of Phœræ (near Iolchos).  
When an oracle declared he could not be saved from a fatal  
disease unless one of his friends died in his stead, Alcestis  
offered herself. This is the subject of the *Alcestis* of  
Euripides.  
*Carded, Combed.*

Has late learned that I told you of ; and ye  
 Who in this royal house live happily,  
 May well desire life for evermore,  
 Which unto me were but a burden sore."

Therewith she left them, but folk say, indeed,  
 That she who spoke was nought but Saturn's seed,  
 In very likeness of that woman old,  
 Whose body soon folk came on, dead and cold,  
 Within the place where she was wont to dwell.  
 Now how these things may be, I cannot tell,  
 But certainly Queen Juno's will was good  
 To finish that which, in the oaken wood  
 Anigh the Centaur's cave, she first began,  
 Giving good heart to the strange-nurtured man.

But, she being gone, fair-limbed Amphinome  
 Said : " Reverend mother, welcome here ye be.  
 And in return for thy so hard-earned lore  
 That thou wilt teach us, surely nevermore  
 Shalt thou do labour whilst thou dwellest here,  
 But unto us shalt thou be lief and dear  
 As though thou wert the best of all our blood."

But, pondering awhile, Medea stood,  
 Then answered : " Lady, I am now grown old,  
 And but small gift to me were heaps of gold,  
 But take me now unto the mighty king  
 That rules this land, and there by everything  
 That he holds sacred, let him swear to me  
 That I shall live in peace and liberty  
 Till quiet death upon my head is brought ;  
 But this great oath being made, things shall be  
     wrought  
 By me, that never can be paid with gold ;  
 For I will make that young which has grown old,  
 And that alive that ye have seen lie dead."

*Saturn's seed, Juno.*

*Strange-nurtured, Brought up away from home ; i.e. Jason.*

Then much they wondered at the words she said,  
 And from the loom did fair Alcestis rise,  
 And tall Amphinome withdrew her eyes  
 From the fair spinners, and Eradne left  
 The carding of the fine wool for the weft.  
 Then said Eradne : " Mother, fear not thou,  
 Surely our father is good man enow,  
 And will not harm thee : natheless, he will swear  
 By whatsoever thing he holdeth dear,  
 Nor need'st thou have a doubt of him at all.  
 Come, for he sitteth now within the hall "

But when they reached the place, glittering and  
 gay  
 With all the slain man's goods, and saw the king  
 Wearing his royal crown and mystic ring,  
 And clad in purple, and his wearied face,  
 Anxious and cruel, gaze from Æson's place,  
 A little thing it seemed to slay him there,  
 As one might slay the lion in his lair,  
 Bestrewn with bones of beast, and man, and maid.

Then as he turned to them, Alcestis said :  
 " O lord and father, here we bring to thee  
 A wise old woman, come from over sea,  
 Who 'mid the gloomy, close-set northern trees  
 Has heard the words of reverend Goddesses  
 I dare not name aloud ; therefore she knows  
 Why this thing perishes, and that thing grows,  
 And what to unborn creatures must befall,  
 And this, the very chiefest thing of all,  
 To make the old man live his life again."

Now paler grew the king's face at this word,  
 And 'mid strange hopes he, too, grew sore afraid,  
 As sighing, he began to think of days  
 Now long gone by, when he was winning praise,  
 And thought : " If so be I should never die,  
 Then would I lay aside all treachery,

And here should all folk live without alarm,  
For to no man would I do any harm,  
Whatso might hap, but I would bring again  
The golden age, free from all fear and pain."

But through his heart there shot a pang of fear,  
As to the queen he said : " Why art thou here,  
Since thou hast mastered this all-saving art,  
Keeping but vagrant life for thine own part  
Of what thou boastest with the Gods to share ?  
Thou, but a dying woman, nowise fair."

" Pelias," she said, " far from the north I come,  
But in Erectheus' city was my home,  
Where being alone, upon a luckless day,  
By the sea-rovers was I snatched away.  
Then had I savage masters, and must learn  
With aching back to bend above the quern ;  
And therewithal must I dread many a hand,  
And writhe beneath the whistle of the whip.

" 'Mid toils like these my youth from me did slip,  
Uncomforted, through lapse of wretched years,  
Till I forgot the use of sobs and tears,  
And like a corpse about my labour went,  
*Grown old before my time, and worn and bent.*  
And then at last this good to me betid,  
That my wise mistress strove to know things hid,  
From mortal men, and doubted all the rest,  
Babblers and young, who in our fox's nest  
Dwelt through the hideous changes of the year :  
Then me she used to help her, and so dear  
I grew, that when upon her tasks she went,  
Into all dangerous service was I sent.

" Moreover, whether that, being dead to fear,  
All things I noted, or that somewhat dear  
I now was grown to those dread Goddesses,  
I know not ; yet amidst the haunted trees

*Erectheus' city, Athens. Erectheus was the sixth king, and died*

*1347 B.C.*  
*Quern, Hand-mill to grind corn.*

More things I learned than my old mistress did,  
Yea, some things surely from all folk else hid.

"But me indeed the whole house hated sore,  
First for my knowledge, next that, sooth to say,  
I, when I well had passed my evil day,  
And came to rule, spared not my fellows aught ;  
Whereby this fate upon my head was brought,  
That flee I must lest worse should hap to me ;  
So on my way unto the Grecian sea  
With weary heart and manifold distress,  
My feet at last thy royal pavement press.  
My lips beseech thy help, O mighty king !  
Help me, that I myself may do the thing  
I most desire, and this great gift give  
To thee and thine, from this time forth to live  
In youth and beauty while the world goes by  
With all its vain desires and misery.

"And if thou doubtest still, then hear me say  
The words thou spakest on a long-past day,  
When thou wert fearful, and the half-shod man  
Had come upon thee through the water wan."

She ceased awhile, and therewith Pelias,  
With open mouth and eyes as fixed as glass,  
Stared at her, wondering. Then again she said :  
"Awhile ago, when he thou knowest dead,  
And he thou thinkest dead, were by thy side,  
A crafty wile thou forgedst ; at that tide  
Telling the tale of Theban Athamas,  
And how that Phryxus dead at Æëa was,  
Thinking (and not in vain) to light the fire  
Of glorious deeds, and measureless desire  
Of fame within the hearts of men o'erbold.

"For thus thou saidst : 'So is the story told  
Of things that happened forty years ago,  
Nor of the Greeks has there been any one  
To set the bones of Phryxus in a tomb,  
Or mete out to the Colchian his due doom.'

" So saidst thou then, and by such words didst drive  
Thy nephew in a hopeless game to strive,  
Wherefore thou deemest wisely he is dead,  
And all the words that he can say are said."

She ceased again, while pale and shuddering,  
Across his eyes the crafty, fearful king  
Drew trembling hands. But yet again she spoke :  
" What if the Gods by me the strong chain broke  
Of thy past deeds, all deeds wrought not in vain,  
And thou with new desires lived again ?  
Durst I still trust thee with my new-gained life ?  
Who for the rest am not thy brother's wife,  
Thy nephew, or thy brother. Be it so.  
Yet since the foolish hearts of men I know,  
Swear on this image of great Artemis  
That unto me thy purpose harmless is,  
Nor wilt thou do me hurt, or more or less.  
Then while thy lips the ivory image press,  
Will I call down all terrors that I know  
Upon thine head if thou shouldst break thy vow.

" Yet for thyself dost thou trust what I say,  
Or wilt thou still be dying day by day ? "

" Yea," said the king, " yea, whosoe'er thou art,  
Needs must I trust thee, in such wise my heart  
Desires life again when this is done.  
Give me the image, O thou fearful one,  
Who knowest all my life, who in the breath  
Wherein thou prayest help still threatenest death."

Then on the image did she swear the king,  
But while he spoke was she still muttering,  
With glittering eyes fixed on him ; but at last,  
When from his lips the dreadful word had passed,  
She said : " O King, pray that thou mayst not die  
Before the fifth day's sun has risen high ;  
Yet on to-morrow morn shalt thou behold  
This hair of mine all glittering as gold,



My tottering feet firm planted on the ground,  
My grey and shrivelled arms grown white and round,  
As once, when by Ilissus' side I trod,  
A snare of beauty to a very God."

Then little did she ask unto her need,  
But fair cold water, and some fitting weed,  
And in a close-shut place to be alone,  
Because no eye must see the wonder done.

And "Oh," she said, "fair women, haste ye now,  
For surely weaker every hour I grow,  
And fear to die ere I can live again."  
Then through the house they hastened, and with pain  
A brazen caldron their fair hands bore up,  
As well wrought over as a king's gold cup;  
Which in a well-hung chamber did they set,  
And filled with clear cold water, adding yet  
New raiment wrought about with ruddy gold,  
And snowy linen wrapped in many a fold.

Then did Medea turn unto the three,  
And said: "Farewell, for no more shall ye see  
These limbs alive, or hear this feeble voice,  
For either shall my changed lips rejoice  
In my new beauty, or else stark and cold  
This wretched body shall your eyes behold.  
Wait now until six hours are over-passed,  
And if ye still shall find the door shut fast,  
Then let the men bring hammers, neither doubt  
That thence my corpse alone shall they bear out.  
But if the door is open or ajar,  
Draw nigh and see how great my helpers are,  
And greet what there ye see with little fear,  
For whatsoever may have touched me here,  
By then, at least, shall no one be with me,  
And nought but this old sorceress shall ye see  
Grown young again; alas! grown young again!  
Would God that I were past the fear and pain!"

So said the Colchian ; but their fearful eyes  
Turned hastily from such hid mysteries  
As there might lurk ; and to their bower they gat,  
And well-nigh silent o'er the weaving sat,  
And did what things they needs must do that day,  
Until that six hours' space had passed away.

So now the royal sisters, sore afraid,  
Each with a taper in her trembling hand,  
Before the fateful chamber-door did stand  
And heard no noise ; whereon Amphinome  
Pushed at the door that yielded, and the three  
Passing with beating hearts the oaken door,  
Pressed noiseless feet upon the polished floor,  
Reddening the moonshine with their tapers' light.

There they beheld the caldron gleaming bright,  
And on the floor the heap of raiment rent  
That erst had hid the body old and bent ;  
And there a crystal phial they beheld  
Empty, that once some wondrous liquor held ;  
And by the window-side asleep they saw  
The Colchian woman, white without a flaw  
From head to heel ; her round arms by her side,  
Her fair face flushed with sweet thoughts, like a bride.

And silently they stood, and wondered there,  
And from their hearts had flown all thoughts at last  
But that of living while the world went past.

Then at her feet Alcestis knelt and prayed :  
“ Oh, who can see thee, Goddess, unafraid ?  
Yet thou thyself has promised life to us,  
More than man's feeble life, and perilous,  
And if thy promise now thou makest vain,  
How can we live our thoughtless life again ?  
Then, would thou ne'er hadst left thine heavenly  
home,

And o'er the green Thessalian meadows come ! ”

Then spoke Medea : “ Young as ye see me,  
The King, your father, in few days shall be,  
And when that he has gained his just reward,

Your lives from death and danger will I guard.  
Go therefore, but come hither with the sun  
To do my bidding ; then shall there be done  
Another marvel ere the morn comes round,  
If yet ye three are dwelling above ground."

Then, trembling, they unto their chamber passed,  
But, they being gone, she made the strong door fast,  
And soon in deep sleep on the couch she lay  
Until the golden sun brought back the day ;  
Nor could she fail arising to be glad  
That once again her own fair form she had,  
And as the fresh air met her pleasantly,  
She smiled, her image in the bath to see  
That had been lost since at the noon she stood  
Beside the still pool in the lonely wood ;  
And she rejoiced her combed-out hair to bind,  
And it was sweet about her ankles slim  
To make the gemmed thongs of the sandals meet,  
With rosy fingers touching her soft feet.

But she being clad, there came the ladies three,  
Who seemed by her but handmaidens to be ;  
And such indeed they were, as dumb with awe  
In the fresh morn that loveliness they saw.

Then said Medea : " Fair queens well be ye !  
Surely in happy hour ye come to me,  
Who, if I might, would do the whole world good.  
But now take heed ; is there some close dark wood  
Anigh the town ?—thither will we to-night,  
And in that place, hidden from all men's sight,  
Shall ye see wonders passing human thought.  
But thither by your hands there must be brought  
Some ancient beast at very point to die,  
That ye may see how loved an one am I  
By dreadful Gods ; there, too, must ye convey  
A brazen caldron ere the end of day,  
And nigh the place there must not fail to be  
Some running stream to help our mystery.  
Yet more, take heed that she who helpeth me,

Whose name I name not, willeth not to see  
The robes of kings and queens upon her slaves ;  
Therefore, if ye would please the one who saves,  
This night must ye be clad in smocks of black,  
And all adornment must your bodies lack,  
Nor must there be a fillet on your hair,  
And the hard road must feel your feet all bare."

" Lady," Eradue said, " all shall be done,  
Nor wilt thou yet have had beneath the sun  
More faithful servants than we are to thee ;  
But wilt thou not the king my father see,  
And gladden him, that he may give thee things  
Such as the heart desires—the spoil of kings ? "

" Nay," said Medea, " much have I to think  
Ere the hot sun beneath the sea shall sink,  
And much to call to mind, and for your sake  
Unto my Helper many a prayer to make."

With that they went, and she, being left alone,  
Took up the image of the Swift-foot One,  
Which for a hidden casket served her well,  
And wherein things were laid right strange to tell :  
So this and that she looked at, and the while  
She muttered charms learned in the river isle.

But at the noontide did they bring her food,  
Saying that all was ready in the wood,  
And that the night alone they waited now,  
Ere unto them those marvels she might show.  
Therefore Medea bade them come again  
When all the house of peaceful sleep was fain,  
And nought was stirring : so at dead of night  
They came to her in black apparel dight,  
Bearing like raiment for the Colchian,  
Who did it on before their faces wan  
And troubled eyes ; then out of gates they stole,  
Setting their faces to the wished-for goal.  
And on they passed, and soon they reached the wood,

*Fillet, Head-band.*

*River isle, Æa.*

*Swift-foot One, Diana.*

And straight made for the midst of it, where stood  
An old horned ram bound fast unto a tree,  
Which the torch-bearer, tall Amphinome,  
Showed to Medea, and not far therefrom  
Unto a brazen caldron did they come,  
Hidden with green boughs ; then Medea bade  
That by their hands a high pile should be made  
Of fallen wood, and all else fit to burn ;  
Which done, unto the caldron did they turn  
And bore it to the river, and did strain  
Their fair round arms to bear it back again  
When it was filled, and raised it on the pile ;  
And then with hands unused to service vile  
Lit up the fire, while Medea took  
Dried herbs from out her wallet, which she shook  
Into the caldron ; till at last a cloud  
Rose up therefrom and the dark trees did shroud.

Then did she bid them the old ram to lead  
Up to the caldron's side, and with good heed  
To quench his just departing feeble life ;  
So in his throat Eradne thrust the knife,  
While in the white arms of Amphinome  
And fair Alcestis, bleating piteously,  
Feebly he struggled ; so being slain at last,  
Piecemeal his members did the sisters cast  
Into the seething water ; then drew back  
And hid their faces in their raiment black,  
The while Medea 'midst the flickering light  
Still sprinkled herbs from out her fingers white,  
And in a steady voice at last did say :

" O thou that turnest night into the day,  
Hast thou a mind to help me on this night,  
That wrong may still be wrong, and right be right  
In all men's eyes ? A little thing I ask  
Before I put an ending to my task."

Scarce had she finished, ere a low black cloud  
Seemed closing o'er the forest, and aloud  
Medea cried : " Oh, strong and terrible !

I fear thee not, do what may please thee well."  
Then as the pale Thessalians with affright  
Crouched on the earth, forth leapt the lightning white  
Over their shrinking heads, and therewithal  
The thunder crashed, and down the rain did fall,  
As though some angry deity were fain  
To make a pool of the Thessalian plain.

Till in a while it ceased, and all was stilled  
Except the murmur of some brook new-filled,  
And dripping of the thick-leaved forest trees  
As they moved gently in the following breeze.  
Yet still King Pelias' daughters feared to rise,  
And with wet raiment still they hid their eyes,  
And trembled, and white-armed Amphinome  
Had dropped the long torch of the resin-tree,  
That lay half-charred among the tall wet grass.  
But unto them did wise Medea pass,  
And said : " O daughters of the sea-born man,  
Rise up, for now the stars are growing wan,  
And the grey dawn is drawing near apace ;  
Nor need ye fear to see another face  
Than this of mine, and all our work is done  
We came to do."

Then slowly, one by one,  
The sisters rose, and, fearful, drew anigh  
The place where they had seen the old ram die ;  
And there beheld, by glimmering twilight grey,  
Where on its side the brazen caldron lay,  
And on the grass and flowers that hid the ground,  
Half-charred extinguished brands lay all around,  
But yet no token of the beast was there ;  
But 'mid the brands a lamb lay, white and fair,  
That now would raise his new-born head and bleat,  
And now would lick the Colchian's naked feet,  
As close he nestled to her : then the three  
Drew nigh unto that marvel timidly,

*To make a pool of.* This is exaggerated : an example of hyperbole.  
*Brands,* Lumps of burning or charred wood.

And gazed at him with wide eyes wondering.

Thereat Medea raised the new-changed thing  
In her white arms, and smiled triumphantly,  
And said : " What things the Gods will do for me  
Ye now behold ; take, then, this new-born beast,  
And hope to sit long ages at the feast,  
And this your youth and loveliness to keep  
When all that ye have known are laid asleep.  
Yet steel your hearts to do a fearful thing,  
Ere this can happen ; for unto the king  
Must your hands do what they have done to-night  
To this same beast. And now, to work aright  
What yet is needful to this mystery,  
Will be four days' full bitter toil for me.  
Take heed that silence, too, on this ye keep,  
Or else a bitter harvest shall ye reap."

So said she, willing well indeed to know,  
Before the promised sign she dared to show,  
What honour Pelias in Iolchos had,  
And if his death would make folk glad or sad.

. . . . .

But at the last, she, mindful of the place  
Where lay fair Argo's glorious battered keel,  
And that dread hidden forest of bright steel,  
Said to Eradne, when her food she brought  
Upon the sixth morn : " Sister, I have thought  
How best to carry out the mystery  
That is so dear at heart to thee and me,  
And find that this night must the thing be done ;  
So seek a place where we may be alone,  
High up, and looking southward o'er the bay ;  
Thither ere midnight must ye steal away,  
And under a huge caldron set dry brands.  
And that being done, take sharp swords in your hands,  
And while I watch the sea and earth and air,  
Go ye to Pelias' well-hung chamber fair ;  
There what ye will ye may most surely do,

If ye will work the way I counsel you."  
 Therewith a phial in her hand she set,  
 And said : " Who tasteth this will soon forget  
 Both life and death, and for no noise will wake  
 In two days' space ; therefore this phial take,  
 And with the king's drink see ye mingle it,  
 As well ye may, and let his servants sit  
 O'er wine so homied at the feast to-night.  
 Then certes shall their sleep not be so light,  
 That bare feet pattering across the floor,  
 Or unused creaking of an open door,  
 Shall rouse them ; though no deadly drug it is,  
 But bringer of kind sleep and dreamy bliss."

So with the midnight came the sisters three,  
 To lead her to a temple by the sea,  
 And in black raiment had they hurried there,  
 With naked feet, and unadorned loose hair,  
 E'en as the other night Medea bade,  
 Except that each one had a trenchant blade  
 Slung round her neck, wherewith to do the deed.

So when all courts and corridors were passed,  
 Unto the ancient fane they came at last.  
 Then spoke Medea and said : " Leave me alone,  
 And go and do that which were better done  
 Ere any streak of dawn makes grey the sky.  
 And come to me when ye have seen him lie  
 Dead to his old life of misdeeds and woe."

Then voiceless from the torchlight did they go  
 Into the darkness, and she, left alone,  
 Set by the torches till the deed was done.

Nought else she saw for a long dreary hour,  
 For all things lay asleep in bed or bower,  
 Or in the little-lighted mountain caves,  
 Or 'neath the swirling streams and toppling waves.

She trembled then, for in the eastern sky  
 A change came, telling of the dawning nigh,  
 And with swift footsteps she began to pace



Betwixt the narrow limits of the place ;  
But as she turned round toward the close once more  
Her eyes beheld the pavement by the door  
Hid by some moving mass ; then joyfully  
She waved her white arms toward the murmuring sea,  
And listened trembling, and although the sound  
Of breakers that the sandy sea-beach ground  
Was loud in the still night, yet could she hear  
Sounds like the shuffling steps of those that bear  
Some heavy thing, and as she gazed, could see  
The thin black raiment of the sisters three  
Blown out, and falling backward as they bent  
Over some burden and right slowly went ;  
And 'twixt their arms could she behold the gleam  
Of gold or gems, or silver-broidered seam,  
Till all was hidden by the undercroft.  
And then she heard them struggling bear aloft  
That dreadful burden, and then went to meet,  
With beating heart, their slow ascending feet,  
Taking a half-burnt torch within her hand.

There by its light did she behold them stand  
Breathless upon the first stone of that fane,  
And with no word she beckoned them again  
To move on toward the terrace o'er the sea,  
And, turning, went before them silently.

And so at last the body down they laid  
Close by the caldron, and Eradne said :

" O thou, our life and saviour ! linger not,  
We pray thee now ! because our hearts are hot  
To see our father look with other eyes  
Upon the sea, the green earth, and the skies,,  
And praise us for this seeming impious deed."

To the head Medea went, and with no word  
The white embroidered linen drew away  
Over the face of the dead man that lay  
As though she doubted yet what thing it was,

*Undercroft, Enclosure underneath ; crypt.*

And saw indeed the face of Pelias.

Then o'er her pale face a bright flush there came,  
And, turning, did she set the torches' flame  
Unto the dry brands of the well-built pyre,  
And, standing back, and waving from the fire  
The shuddering girls, somewhat thereon she cast,  
Like unto incense : then with furious blast  
Shot up a smokeless flame into the air,  
Quivering and red, nor then did she forbear  
To cry aloud, in her old Colchian tongue,  
Proud words, and passionate, that strangely rung  
Within the poor bewildered sisters' ears,  
Filling their hearts with vague and horrid fears.

## BOOK XVI

BUT other watchers were there on that night,  
Who saw the birth of that desired light  
From nigh green Cicynethus' woody shore.

For in mid-channel there, with every oar  
Run out, and cable ready for the slip,  
Did Jason hold his glorious storm-tossed ship,  
While in the top did keen-eyed Lynceus stand,  
And every man had ready to his hand  
Sharp spear, and painted shield, and grinded sword.  
Thus as they waited, suddenly the word  
Rang out from Jason's mouth, and in the sea  
The cable splashed, and straight the Minyæ  
Unto their breasts the shaven ash-trees brought,  
And, as the quivering blades the water caught,  
Shouted for joy, and quickly passed the edge  
Of Cicynethus, green with reed and sedge.  
And whitening the dark waters of the bay,  
Unto Iolchos did they take their way.

Meanwhile the Colchian queen triumphantly  
Watched the grey dawn steal forth above the sea,  
Still murmuring softly in the Colchian tongue,

While o'er her head the flickering fire hung,  
And in the brazen caldron's lips did gleam,  
Wherefrom went up a great white cloud of steam,  
To die above their heads in that fresh air.  
But Pelias' daughters, writhing in despair,  
Silent for dread of her, she noted nought,  
Nor of the dead man laid thereby she thought.

E'en as she watched, the keel had touched the sand,  
And catching up her raiment in her hand,  
She ran with speed, and in a trice his hand  
Had caught her slim wrist, and he shouted out :  
" Ashore, O heroes ! and no more have doubt  
That all is well done which we wished were done  
By this my love, by this the glorious one,  
The saviour of my life, the Queen of Love,  
To whom alone of all who are above,  
Or on the earth, will I pour wine, or give  
The life of anything that once did live."

Then all men shouting, leapt forth on the sand,  
And stood about them shield and spear in hand,  
Rejoicing that their mighty task was done ;  
But as he saw the newly-risen sun  
Shine on the town upon their left that lay,  
Then smiling joyously, did Jason say :

" O heroes, tell me, is the day not won ?  
Look how the sun's rays now are stealing on,  
And soon will touch that temple's marble feet  
Where stood the king our parting keel to greet.  
But the great golden image of the God  
Holds up, unlighted yet, his crystal rod,  
And surely ere the moon shall gleam on it  
Upon my father's throne his son shall sit,  
Hedged round with spears of loyal men and true,  
And all be done that we went forth to do."

(Then, bearing with them the Golden Fleece, and the  
dead body of Pelias, the Argonauts made solemn entry  
into the city.)

Now therefore when the gates were open wide,  
Shouting the folk drew back on either side,  
All wild with joy ; but when they did behold  
The high-raised Fleece of curling ruddy gold,  
And the glad heroes' mighty heads beneath,  
And throned Medea, with her golden wreath,  
And folded hands, and chiefest thing of all,  
The godlike man who went beside the pail,  
Whereon the body of their tyrant lay,  
Then did their voices fail them on that day,  
And many a man of weeping there was fain.

At last did Jason set his foot again  
Upon the steps of that same ivory throne  
Where once he fronted Pelias all alone,  
And bare of friends : but now he turned about,  
And, 'mid the thunder of the people's shout,  
Scarce heard his fellows' spears : and by his side  
There stood his gold-adornèd Colchian bride,  
With glad tears glistening in her sweet grey eyes :  
And dead, at end of foiled treacheries,  
There lay his foe, the slayer of his kin.

Then did he clasp the hand that lay within  
His mighty and sword-hardened fingers brown,  
And cried aloud above the shouting town :

" Tell me, O people of my father's land,  
Before whose ivory well-wrought throne I stand,  
And whose fair-towered house mine eyes behold,  
Glittering with brazen pillars, rich with gold ? "

(In few words did he retail the story of their adventures,  
and expose the evil deeds of King Pelias. Then he con-  
cluded :)

" So have the Gods wrought ; but in no wise will I  
Take seat beneath this golden canopy,  
Before ye tell me, people of this land,  
Whose throne is this before the which I stand,  
Whose towered house this is mine eyes behold,

Girt round with brazen pillars, bright with gold "

Then, ere he ceased, the people's shout broke in  
Upon his speech : " Most glorious of thy kin !  
Be thou our king—be thou our king alone,  
That we may think the age of iron gone,  
And Saturn come with every peaceful thing :—  
Jason for king ! the Conqueror for king ! "

And through the happy clamour of the folk,  
At Jason's bidding, the great trumpet broke,  
And great Echion's voice rang clear and strong,  
As he cried silence ; then across the throng  
Did Jason cry : " O people, thanked be ye,  
That in such wise ye give yourselves to me.  
And now, O friends, what more is there to say  
But this ? Be glad, and feast this happy day,  
Nor spend one coin of your own store for this ;  
Nor shall the altars of the high Gods miss  
Their due thank-offering : and She chief of all,  
Who caused that this same happy time should fall,  
Shall have a tithe of all that 'longs to me.

" And ye, O loved companions o'er the sea,  
Come to my golden house, and let us feast,  
Nor let time weary us this night at least ; -  
O ! be so glad that this our happy day  
For all times past, all times to come may pay "

Then, in such guise, they went triumphantly  
To all the temples of that city fair,  
And royal gifts they gave the great Gods there.

Therefrom unto his own house Jason came,  
He had not entered since the night his name  
Rang 'twixt the marble walls triumphantly,  
And all folks set their hearts upon the sea.  
So, now again, when shadows 'gan to fall  
Still longer from the west, within that hall

*Age of iron*, Last of the four ages into which the ancients divided  
the past : golden, silver, bronze, iron.  
*Echion*, Herald of the Argonauts.  
*She*, Juno.

Once more the heroes sat above their wine,  
Once more they hearkened music nigh divine,  
Once more the maidens' flower-scattering hands  
Seemed better prizes than well-peopled lands.

Glorious and royal, now the deed was done,  
Seemed in that hall the face of every one,  
Who, 'twixt the thin plank and the bubbling sea,  
Had pulled the smooth oar-handle past his knee.

But the next morn, for slaughtered Æson's sake  
The games began, with many a sacrifice,  
And, these being all accomplished, gifts of price  
The heroes took at Jason's open hands,  
And, going homewards, unto many lands  
They bore the story of their wandering.

And now is Jason mighty lord and king,  
And wedded to the fairest queen on earth,  
And with no trouble now to break his mirth ;  
And, loved by all, lives happy, free from blame,  
Nor less has won the promised meed of fame.  
So, having everything he once desired  
Within the wild, ere yet his heart was fired  
By Juno's word, he lives an envied man,  
Having these things, that scarce another can,  
Ease, love, and fame, and youth that knows no dread  
Of any horrors lurking far ahead  
Across the sunny, flowered fields of life :  
—Youth seeing no end unto the joyous strife.

And thus in happy days, and rest, and peace,  
Here ends the winning of the Golden Fleece.

## BOOK XVII

So ends the winning of the Golden Fleece—  
So ends the tale of that sweet rest and peace  
That unto Jason and his love befell ;  
Another story now my tongue must tell,

And tremble in the telling. Would that I  
 Had but some portion of that mastery  
 That from the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent  
 Through these five hundred years such songs have sent  
 To us, who, meshed within this smoky net  
 Of unrejoicing labour, love them yet.  
 And thou, O Master!—Yea, my Master still,  
 Whatever feet have scaled Parnassus' hill  
 Since, like thy measures, clear and sweet and strong,  
 Thames' stream scarce fettered bore the bream along  
 Unto the bastioned bridge, his only chain.—  
 O Master, pardon me, if yet in vain  
 Thou art my Master, and I fail to bring  
 Before men's eyes the image of the thing  
 My heart is filled with : thou whose dreamy eyes  
 Beheld the flush to Cressid's cheeks arise,  
 As Troilus rode up the praising street,  
 As clearly as they saw thy townsmen meet  
 Those who in vineyards of Poictou withstood  
 The glittering horror of the steel-topped wood.

Ten years have passed, since in the market-place  
 The hero stood with flushed and conquering face,

*Mastery, Art, skill.*

*Such songs, Those of Chaucer, who for some time lived in Kent. This smoky net, London. Note Morris on his hobby-horse, love of the Middle Ages, hatred of industrialism.*

*O Master. Geoffrey Chaucer, born in London, 1340 (?); died, 1400. Yea, my Master . . . only chain. This must be treated as a parenthesis. Try omitting it, to discover the sequence of thought in the context.*

*Whatever feet . . . hill, Whatever poets there have been. Parnassus, a mountain in Phocis, seat of Apollo and the Muses, inspirers of poetry.*

*Bream, A fresh-water fish.*

*Bastioned bridge, London Bridge, originally on broad piles.*

*Cressid, Troilus, Chief figures in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the tale of the Greek Cressida and the Trojan Troilus, patterns respectively of false and true love.*

*Poictou, Battle of Poitiers, 1356. Chaucer, page to the wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, may have been present.*

*Wood, Spear-shafts.*

And life before him like one happy day ;  
But many an hour thereof has passed away  
In mingled trouble and felicity.  
And now at Corinth, kissed by either sea,  
He dwells, not governed now or governing,  
Since there his kinsman Creon is a king.

And with him still abides the Colchian  
But little changed, since o'er the waters wan  
She gazed upon the mountains that she knew  
Still lessening as the plunging Argo flew  
Over the billows on the way to Greece.  
But in these ten sweet years of rest and peace  
Two fair man-children has she borne to him,  
Who, joyous, fair of face, and strong of limb,  
Full oft shall hear the glorious story told  
Of Argo and the well-won Fleece of Gold.

And 'midst these living things has Argo found  
A home here also ; on the spot of ground  
'Twixt Neptune's temple and the eastern sea,  
She looks across the waves unceasingly ;  
And as their ridges draw on toward the land,  
The wind tells stories of the kingly band.  
There, with the fixed and unused oars spread out,  
She lies amidst the ghosts of song and shout,  
And merry laughter, that were wont to fill  
Her well-built hollow, slowly dying still,  
Like all that glorious company of kings  
Who in her did such well-remembered things.

(Jason, growing tired of Medea, and led on by Creon proposes to wed Creon's only child, Glaucē, that he may himself one day become king. Medea, broken-hearted turns again, in her desire for revenge, to the practice of sorcery. She pretends to forgive, and sends to Glaucē a beautiful mantle to wear at her wedding. But to touch

*Kinsman.* Creon was son of Sisyphus, brother of Cretheus, Jason's grandfather.  
*Man-children,* Mermerus and Pheres.



the clasp means the achievement of Medea's revenge. All goes well until Jason arrives for the happy ceremony.)

Giddy with joy one moment did he gaze  
 And saw his love her slender fingers raise  
 Unto the mantle's clasp—the next the hall  
 Was filled with darting flames from wall to wall,  
 And bitter screams rang out, as here and there,  
 Scorched, and with outspread arms, the damsels fair  
 Rushed through the hall ; but swiftly Jason ran,  
 Grown in one moment like an old worn man,  
 Up to the dais, whence one bitter cry  
 He heard, of one in utmost agony,  
 Calling upon his once so helpful name ;  
 But when unto the fiery place he came,  
 Nought saw he but the flickering tongues of fire  
 That up the wall were climbing high and higher ;  
 And on the floor a heap of ashes white,  
 The remnant of his once-beloved delight,  
 For whom his ancient love he cast away,  
 And of her sire who brought about that day.

Then he began to know what he had done,  
 And madly through the palace did he run,  
 Calling on Glauce, mingling with her name  
 The name of her that brought him unto fame,  
 Colchian Medea, who, for her reward,  
 Had lonely life made terrible and hard,  
 By love cast back, within her heart to grow  
 To madness and the vengeance wrought out now.

(Distraught with grief, Jason attempted to slay himself, but was saved by an old crone, his nurse in past times.)

Then with the crone did Jason go along,  
 And let her thin hand hold his fingers strong,  
 As though a child he were in that old day,  
 Ere in the centaur's woodland cave he lay.

But through the house unto a distant room,  
 Dark-hung, she brought him, where, amidst the gloom,  
 Speechless he lay, when she had made him drink  
 Some potion pressed from herbs plucked by the brink  
 Of scarce-known lakes of Pontus ; then she said,  
 As she beheld at last his weary head  
 Sink on the pillow : " Jason, rest thee now,  
 And may some kind God smooth thy wrinkled brow.  
 Behold, to-morrow comes, and thou art young,  
 Nor on one string are all life's jewels strung ;  
 Thou shalt be great, and many a land shalt save,  
 And of thy coming life more joy shalt have  
 Than thou hast thought of yet."

He heard her words,

But as the far-off murmur of the birds  
 The townsman hears ere yet the morn is late,  
 While streets are void and shut is every gate ;  
 But still they soothed him, and he fell asleep,  
 While at his feet good watch the crone did keep.

But what a waking unto him shall be !  
 And what a load of shameful misery  
 His life shall bear ! His old love cast away,  
 His new love dead upon that fearful day,  
 Childless, dishonoured, must his days go by.  
 For in another chamber did there lie  
 Two little helpless bodies side by side,  
 Smiling as though in sweet sleep they had died,  
 And feared no ill. And she who thus had slain  
 Those fruits of love, the folk saw not again,  
 Nor knew where she was gone ; yet she died not,  
 But fleeing, somehow, from that fatal spot,  
 She came to Athens, and there long did dwell,  
 Whose after life I list not here to tell.

*For in another chamber.* Note Morris's restraint. He gives no details of the harrowing murder.  
*Whose after life.* She married Ægeus, King of Athens, and later driven out for attempting to poison his son Theseus, she went home to Colchis, and there died.

But as for Jason ;—Creon now being slain,  
And Corinth kingless, every man was fain,  
Remembering Jason's wisdom and sharp sword,  
To have the hero for their king and lord.  
So on his weary brows they set the crown,  
And he began to rule that noble town,  
And 'midst all things, somewhat his misery  
Was dulled unto him, as the days went by,  
And he began again to cast his eyes  
On lovely things, and hope began to rise  
Once more within his heart.

But on a day  
From out the goodly town he took his way,  
To where, beneath the cliffs of Cenchreæ,  
Lay Argo, looking o'er the ridgy sea.  
Being fain once more to ponder o'er past days,  
Ere he should set his face to winning praise  
Among the shouts of men and clash of steel.

But when he reached the well-remembered keel,  
The sun was far upon his downward way,  
At afternoon of a bright summer day.

And Jason, looking out across the sea,  
Beheld the signs of wind a-drawing nigh,  
Gathering about the clear cold eastern sky,  
And longings that had long been gathering  
Stirred in his heart, and now he felt the sting  
Of life within him, and at last he said :

“ Why should I move about as move the dead,  
And take no heed of what all men desire ?  
Once more I feel within my heart the fire  
That drave me forth unto the white-walled town,  
Leaving the sunny slopes, and thick-leaved crown  
Of grey old Pelion, that alone I knew,  
Great deeds and wild, and desperate things to do.

“ Once did I win a noble victory,  
I won a kingdom, and I cast it by

*Cenchreæ*, The east harbour of Corinth.

For rest and peace, and rest and peace are gone.  
I had a fair love, that loved me alone,  
And made me that I am in all men's eyes ;  
And like my hard-earned kingdom, my fair prize,  
I cast my tender heart, my Love away ;  
Yet failed I not to love, until a day,  
A day I nigh forget, took all from me  
That once I had, yet is that as a dream,  
And still my life a happy life I deem,  
But ah ! so short, so short ! for I am left  
Of love, of honour, and of joy bereft—  
And yet not dead—ah, if I could but see  
But once again her who delivered me  
From death and many troubles, then no more  
Would I turn backward from the shadowy shore,  
And all my life would seem but perfect gain.

“ Alas ! what hope is this ? is it in vain  
I long to see her ? Lo, am I not young ?  
In many a song my past deeds have been sung,  
And these my hands that guided Argo through  
The blue Symplegades, still deeds may do,  
For now the world has swerved from truth and right,  
Cumbered with monsters, empty of delight ;  
And, 'midst all this, what honour I may win,  
That she may know of and rejoice therein,  
And come to seek me, and upon my throne  
May find me sitting worshipped and alone ?

“ O hope not vain ! O surely not quite vain !  
For, with the next returning light will I  
Cast off my moody sorrow utterly,  
And once more live my life as in times past,  
And 'mid the chance of war the die will cast.

“ And surely, whatso great deeds have been done,  
Since with my fellows, the Gold Fleece I won ;  
Still here some wild bull clears the frightened fields ;

*For now the world . . . delight.* Morris is here hitting at his own day—of industrial ugliness.

There a great lion cleaves the sevenfold shields ;  
There dwells some giant robber of the land ;  
There whirls some woman-slayer's red right hand.  
So be it, surely shall I snatch fair peace  
From out the hand of war, and calm delight  
From the tumultuous horror of the fight."

So saying, gazing still across the sea  
Heavy with days and nights of misery,  
His eyes waxed dim, and calmer still he grew,  
Still pondering over times and things he knew,  
While now the sun had sunk behind the hill,  
And from a white-thorn nigh a thrush did fill  
The balmy air with echoing minstrelsy,  
And cool the night-wind blew across the sea,  
And round about the soft-winged bats did sweep.

So 'midst all this at last he fell asleep,  
Nor did his eyes behold another day,  
For Argo, slowly rotting all away,  
Had dropped a timber here, and there an oar,  
All through that year, but people of the shore  
Set all again in order as it fell.  
But now the stem-post, that had carried well,  
The second rafter in King Pelias' hall,  
Began at last to quiver towards its fall,  
And whether loosed by some divinity,  
Or that the rising wind from off the sea  
Blew full upon it, surely I know not—  
But, when the day dawned, still on the same spot  
Beneath the ruined stem did Jason lie  
Crushed, and all dead of him that here can die.  
And there, where he had hoped that hope in vain,  
They laid him in a marble tomb carved fair  
With histories of his mighty deeds ; and there  
Such games as once he loved yet being alive,  
They held for ten days, and withal did give

*Sevenfold, Hide-thicknesses.*

*That hope, Of making another voyage of adventure.*

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Gifts to the Gods with many a sacrifice,  
But chiefest, among all the things of price,  
Argo they offered to the Deity  
Who shakes the hard earth with the rolling sea.

And now is all that ancient story told  
Of him who won the guarded Fleece of Gold.

# INTRODUCTION TO "CUPID AND PSYCHE"

## I. THE EARTHLY PARADISE

" While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen  
Moves over bills of lading—mid such times  
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes "  
Prologue: *The Wanderers*.

*The Canterbury Tales*, 1387-1400.—No body of poetry appealed more to Morris than the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer presented twenty-nine pilgrims assembled at the Tabard Inn, Southwark, to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. They were a motley throng. The Church supplied the lion's share of representatives, but few important bodies of the community were altogether left out. At the suggestion of the host, jovial Harry Bailey, they agreed that each should tell two stories on the outward journey, and two on the return; the teller of the best tales, as judged by the host, to be entertained to dinner on the arrival back at the Tabard. Only twenty of the tales were actually written, as the plan was for a superhuman work; but Chaucer drew his material from a very wide field—Italian authors (he took his very scheme partly from Boccaccio's *Decameron*), French romances, German folk-tales, and the like. Above all, each pilgrim had his

well-marked individuality apart from the story he told; and the real originality of Chancer lay in the constant play of a whimsical or gently satirical humour.

*The Earthly Paradise*, 1868-70.—Morris, in his *Earthly Paradise*, planned something similar but simpler, eliminating marked individuality of character, making no attempt to present types of a whole community, reducing the number of stories to twenty-four, and drawing them from only two sources—Greek legend and mediæval. Even then the complete work ran to some 42,000 lines.

*Prologue: The Wanderers*.—In the Prologue we learn how a band of Wanderers passed from Norway to Bremen, where they bought a tall ship, the *Rose-Garland*, and set sail, in the time of our King Edward III., for a visionary land in the West. The Black Death had driven them forth, and they sought an Earthly Paradise where eternal youth should be theirs. That deathless land they did not find, but after many perils and in their old age they came to a nameless city, "white as the changing walls of faërie," where dwelt a race of Greeks, whose forefathers had voyaged from Ancient Greece, and in this settlement kept up their old language and religion. The Wanderers—Norse, German, and Breton—had store of mediæval chronicles and tales; when, therefore, they had told all the adventures of their hazardous quest, what more natural than that they should share these other stories with their hosts, who in their turn would relate the legends handed down to them from their Greek ancestors? So on the 1st of March

"There spoke an old man, the land's chief priest,  
Who said, 'Dear guests, the year begins to-day,  
And fain are we, before it pass away,  
To hear some tales of that now altered world,  
Wherefrom our fathers in old time were hurled  
By the hard hands of fate and destiny.  
Nor would ye hear perchance unwillingly



How we have dealt with stories of the land  
 Wherein the tombs of our forefathers stand :  
 Wherefore henceforth two solemn feasts shall be  
 In every month, at which some history  
 Shall crown our joyance ; and this day, indeed,  
 I have a story ready for our need,  
 If ye will hear it.' "

He then told the story of *Atalanta's Race*, and in the same month a Wanderer told the story of *The Man born to be King*. So the twelve months of the year brought forth twenty-four stories ; and these were connected by interludes picturing either the months themselves and their changes, or the gatherings at which the tales were told.

*The Earthly Paradise* (in which *Jason* was originally intended to appear) thus consists of a lengthy Prologue, a series of short vignettes of the months, an Epilogue, twelve clear-cut Greek stories (of which probably the best is *Cupid and Psyche*, told in the month of May), and twelve fantastic or terrible mediæval stories (ranging from the slight *Writing on the Image* to the long and powerful *Lovers of Gudrun*) : a great performance, but alas ! marked by none of Chaucer's humour and good fellowship.

## II. CUPID AND PSYCHE

" As for the matter, I dare say of it  
 That it is lovely as the lovely May ;  
 Pass then the manner, since the learned say  
 No written record was there of the tale,  
 Ere we from our fair land of Greece set sail ;  
 How this may be I know not, this I know  
 This flower, a gift from other lands has grown."  
May.

*The Original*.—With *Jason*, the original legends having variants, Morris took liberties ; but with the

well-established story of *Cupid and Psyche* he was perfectly content, and therefore restricted his attention to the manner of the telling, and the incidental detail. The original version occurs in the *Golden Ass*, a Latin novel of adventure, by Apuleius (African-born in A.D. 124—i.e., as in the lines quoted above, long after the palmy days of Ancient Greece); in which a young maiden, captured by a band of thieves, forgets her own woe on hearing an old woman retail the woes of Psyche.

*Its Suitability to Morris.*—The incidental details that Morris supplied are in such perfect accord that Mr. Noyes, the poet, claims "There is no poem in any language so full of material, earthly loveliness as (Morris's) *Cupid and Psyche*." The story itself partly accounts for this: it exactly suited the passive side of Morris, the early tapestried and decorative side. There was another side to him, his fierce Viking side: and by virtue of it he was to compose his masterpiece, *Sigurd the Volsung*. But an essential element of his genius found its complete expression in this earlier work. The very story, Mr. Noyes suggests, is an allegory of Morris's dream-textured poesy: Psyche is not content to believe her lover Cupid beautiful, she must light a midnight lamp and see for herself, only to lose him from her sight altogether; so must we be content to yield ourselves up to the fascination of this poem as a whole, and not try too much to scrutinize isolated beauties.

*The Sense of Wonder.*—The poem is romantic in the Pre-Raphaelite sense. It exhibits the exceptional in life rather than the customary, but by fidelity to natural detail; and the detail tells by the poet's childlike sense of wonder, the very blue of the sky demanding attention as much as if it were the latest scientific invention. The poet has the attitude that a child-genius might have towards an Aladdin's Cave into which he had been suddenly introduced. Or he is

like all the rest of us in experiencing an intense and pleasurable dream.

*Meaning.*—As for its meaning, it may be gathered from Sir Lewis Morris's lines—

“ The high gods  
Link Love with Faith, and he withdraws himself  
From the full gaze of knowledge.”

Again it is apparent in his version of Cupid's farewell to the guilty Psyche—

“ Farewell ! There is no Love except with Faith,  
And thine is dead ! Farewell ! I come no more ! ”

But the beautiful story speaks for itself, and stands in no need of further comment.

# THE STORY OF "CUPID AND PSYCHE"

## ARGUMENT

Psyche, a king's daughter, by her exceeding beauty caused the people to forget Venus ; therefore the goddess would fain have destroyed her . nevertheless she became the bride of Love, yet in an unhappy moment lost him by her own fault, and wandering through the world suffered many evils at the hands of Venus, for whom she must accomplish fearful tasks. But the gods and all nature helped her, and in process of time she was reunited to Love, forgiven by Venus, and made immortal by the Father of gods and men.

In the Greek land of old there was a King  
Happy in battle, rich in everything ;  
Most rich in this, that he a daughter had  
Whose beauty made the longing city glad.  
She was so fair, that strangers from the sea  
Just landed, in the temples thought that she  
Was Venus visible to mortal eyes,  
New come from Cyprus for a world's surprise.  
And Psyche is her name in stories old,  
As ever by our fathers we were told.

All this beheld Queen Venus from her throne,  
And felt that she no longer was alone

*Cyprus*, Near which Venus was said to have sprung from the foam  
of the sea.

In beauty, but, if only for a while,  
This maiden matched her god-enticing smile ;  
Therefore, she wrought in such a wise, that she,  
If honoured as a goddess, certainly  
Was dreaded as a goddess none the less,  
And midst her wealth, dwelt long in loneliness.

Two sisters had she, and men deemed them fair,  
But as King's daughters might be anywhere,  
And these to men of name and great estate  
Were wedded, while at home must Psyche wait.  
The sons of kings before her silver feet  
Still bowed, and sighed for her ; in measures sweet  
The minstrels to the people sung her praise,  
Yet must she live a virgin all her days.

So to Apollo's fane her father sent,  
Seeking to know the dreadful God's intent,  
And therewith sent he goodly gifts of price.  
And when three lords with these were gone away,  
Nor could return until the fortieth day,  
Ill was the King at ease, and neither took  
Joy in the chase, or in the pictured book  
The skilled Athenian limner had just wrought,  
Nor in the golden cloths from India brought.

At last the day came for those lords' return,  
And then 'twixt hope and fear the King did burn,  
As on his throne with great pomp he was set,  
And by him Psyche, knowing not as yet  
Why they had gone : thus waiting, at noontide  
They in the palace heard a voice outside,  
And soon the messengers came hurrying,  
And with pale faces knelt before the King,  
And rent their clothes, and each man on his head  
Cast dust, the while a trembling courtier read  
This scroll, wherein the fearful answer lay,  
Whereat from every face joy passed away.

## THE ORACLE

"O father of a most unhappy maid,  
 O King, whom all the world henceforth shall know  
 As wretched among wretches, be afraid  
 To ask the gods thy misery to show,  
 But if thou needs must hear it, to thy woe  
 Take back thy gifts to feast thine eyes upon,  
 When thine own flesh and blood some beast hath  
 won.

"For hear thy doom, a rugged rock there is  
 Set back a league from thine own palace fair,  
 There leave the maid, that she may wait the kiss  
 Of the fell monster that doth harbour there :  
 A fire there goeth from his mouth that burns  
 Worse than the flame of Phlegethon the red—  
 To such monster shall thy maid be wed.

"And if thou sparest now to do this thing,  
 I will destroy thee and thy land also,  
 And of dead corpses shalt thou be the King,  
 And stumbling through the dark land shalt thou go,  
 Howling for second death to end thy woe ;  
 Live therefore as thou mayst and do my will,  
 And be a King that men may envy still."

What man was there, whose face changed not for  
 grief  
 At hearing this ? Psyche, shrunk like the leaf  
 The autumn frost first touches on the tree,  
 Stared round about with eyes that could not see,  
 And muttered sounds from lips that said no word,  
 And still within her ears the sentence heard

*Fell, Fierce.*

*Phlegethon*, A river of hell, with burning waters.

*What man . . . this ?*—A rhetorical question.

When all was said and silence fell on all  
 'Twixt marble columns and adorned wall.

Then spoke the King, bowed down with misery,  
 "What help is there! O daughter, let us die,  
 Or else together fleeing from this land,  
 From town to town go wandering hand in hand."

Then answered Psyche, through her bitter tears,  
 "Alas! my father, I have known these years  
 That with some woe the gods have dowered me,  
 And weighed 'gainst riches infelicity;  
 Ill is it then against the gods to strive;  
 Live on, O father, those that are alive  
 May still be happy; would it profit me  
 To live awhile, and ere I died to see  
 Thee perish, and all folk who love me well,  
 And then at last be dragged myself to hell?"

And therewith she rose and gat away,  
 And in her chamber, mourning long she lay,  
 Thinking of all the days that might have been.

But of the luckless King now must we tell,  
 Who sat devising means to 'scape that shame,  
 Until the frightened people thronging came  
 About the palace, and drove back the guards,  
 Making their way past all the gates and wards;  
 And, putting chamberlains and marshals by,  
 Surged round the very throne tumultuously.  
 Then knew the wretched King all folk had heard  
 The miserable sentence, and the word  
 The gods had spoken; and from out his seat  
 He rose, and spoke in humble words, unmeet  
 For a great King, and prayed them give him grace,  
 While 'twixt his words the tears ran down his face  
 On to his raiment stiff with golden thread.

But little heeded they the words he said,  
 For very fear had made them pitiless;

Nor cared they for the maid and her distress,  
But clashed their spears together and 'gan cry :  
" For one man's daughter shall the people die,  
And this fair land become an empty name,  
Because thou art afraid to meet the shame  
Wherewith the gods reward thy hidden sin ?  
Nay, by their glory do us right herein ! "

" Ye are in haste to have a poor maid slain,"  
The King said ; " but my will herein is vain,  
For ye are many, I one aged man :  
Let one man speak, if for his shame he can."

Then stepped a sturdy dyer forth, who said,—  
" Fear of the gods brings no shame, by my head.  
Listen ; thy daughter we would have thee leave  
Upon the fated mountain this same eve ;  
So shalt thou save our wives and little ones,  
And something better than a heap of stones,  
Dwelt in by noisome things, this town shall be,  
And thou thyself shalt keep thy sovereignty ;  
But if thou wilt not do the thing I say,  
Then shalt thou live in bonds from this same day,  
And we will bear thy maid unto the hill,  
And from the dread gods save the city still."

Then loud they shouted at the words he said,  
And round the head of the unhappy maid,  
Dreaming uneasily of long-past joys,  
Floated the echo of that dreadful noise,  
And changed her dreams to dreams of misery.  
But when the King knew that the thing must be,  
And that no help there was in his distress,  
He bade them have all things in readiness  
To take the maiden out at sun-setting,  
And wed her to the unknown dreadful thing.  
So through the palace passed with heavy cheer  
Her women gathering the sad wedding gear ;  
Who lingering long, yet at the last must go,



To waken Psyche to her bitter woe.  
 Then suddenly remembering her distress,  
 She bowed her head and 'gan to weep and wail,  
 But let them wrap her in the bridal veil,  
 And bind the sandals to her silver feet,  
 And set the rose-wreath on her tresses sweet ;  
 But spoke no word, yea, rather, wearily  
 Turned from the yearning face and pitying eye  
 Of any maid who seemed about to speak.

Now through the garden trees the sun 'gan break,  
 And that inevitable time drew near ;  
 Then through the courts, grown cruel, strange, and  
 drear,

Since the bright morn, they led her to the gate,  
 Where she beheld a golden litter wait.

So then was Psyche taken to the hill,  
 And through the town the streets were void and still ;  
 For in their houses all the people stayed,  
 Of that most mournful music sore afraid.  
 But on the way a marvel did they see,  
 For, passing by, where wrought of ivory,  
 There stood the Goddess of the flowery isle,  
 All folk could see the carven image smile.

But when anigh the hill's bare top they came,  
 Where Psyche must be left to meet her shame,  
 They set the litter down, and drew aside  
 The golden curtains from the wretched bride,  
 Who at their bidding rose and with them went  
 Afoot amidst her maids with head down-bent,  
 Until they came unto the drear rock's brow ;  
 And there as she stood apart, not weeping now,  
 But pale as privet blossom is in June,  
 There as the quivering flutes left off their tune,  
 In trembling arms the weeping, haggard King  
 Caught Psyche, who, like some half-lifeless thing,  
 Took all his kisses, and no word could say,

Until at last perforce he turned away ;  
Because the longest agony has end,  
And homeward through the twilight did they wend.

But Psyche, now faint and bewildered,  
Remembered little of her pain and dread ;  
Her doom drawn nigh took all her fear away,  
And left her faint and weary ; as they say  
It haps to one who 'neath a lion lies,  
Who stunned and helpless feels not ere he dies  
The horror of the yellow fell, the red  
Hot mouth, and white teeth gleaming o'er his head ;  
So Psyche felt, as sinking on the ground  
She cast one weary vacant look around,  
And at the ending of that wretched day  
Swooning beneath the risen moon she lay.

(Here the story goes backward awhile to make clear why the oracle had issued so hard a decree. Venus, at her dwelling in Cyprus, had spoken to her son Cupid, begging him to revenge her by causing Psyche to wed some man "that not the poorest peasant girl in Greece would look on for the gift of Jason's fleece." Cupid, only too willing to do this, flew down the wind to where Psyche dwelt, and found her lying asleep in a garden. So beautiful she was, he fell in love with her, and, forgetting his promise to Venus, appealed to Father Jove to endow Psyche with the gift of immortality, as she might then become his wife. Meanwhile, as the gift could not be at once granted, Cupid hit upon a ruse to obtain possession of Psyche forthwith,)

Withal did Love call unto him the Wind  
Called Zephyrus, who most was to his mind,  
And said, " O rainy wooer of the spring,  
I pray thee, do for me an easy thing ;  
To such a hill-top go, O gentle wind,  
And there a sleeping maiden shalt thou find ;

*Zephyrus, The gentle West Wind.*

Her perfect body in thy arms with care  
Take up, and unto the green valley bear  
That lies before my noble house of gold ;  
There leave her lying on the daisies cold."

Then, smiling, towards the place the fair Wind went,  
And 'neath his wing the sleeping lilies bent,  
And flying 'twixt the green earth and the sea  
Made the huge anchored ships dance merrily;  
And swung round from the east the gilded vanes  
On many a palace, and from unhorsed wains  
Twitched off the wheat-straw in his hurried flight ;  
And in no long time he came full in sight  
Of Psyche laid in swoon upon the hill,  
And smiling, set himself to do Love's will ;  
For in his arms he took her up with care,  
Wondering to see a mortal made so fair,  
And came into the vale in little space,  
And set her down in the most flowery place ;  
And then unto the plains of Thessaly  
Went ruffling up the edges of the sea.

Now underneath the world the sun was gone,  
But brighter shone the stars so left alone,  
Until a faint green light began to show  
Far in the east, whereby did all men know,  
Who lay awake either with joy or pain,  
That day was coming on their heads again ;  
Then widening, soon it spread to grey twilight,  
And in a while with gold the east was bright ;  
The birds burst out a-singing one by one,  
And o'er the hill-top rose the mighty sun.

Therewith did Psyche open wide her eyes,  
And rising on her arm, with great surprise  
Gazed on the flowers wherein so deep she lay,  
And wondered why upon that dawn of day  
Out in the fields she had lift up her head  
Rather than in her balmy gold-hung bed.  
Then, suddenly remembering all her woes,

She sprang upon her feet, and yet arose  
Within her heart a mingled hope and dread  
Of some new thing ; and now she raised her head,  
And gazing round about her timidly,  
A lovely grassy valley could she see,  
That steep grey cliffs upon three sides did bound,  
And under these, a river sweeping round,  
With gleaming curves the valley did embrace,  
And seemed to make an island of that place ;  
And all about were dotted leafy trees,  
The elm for share, the linden for the bees,  
The noble oak, long ready for the steel  
That in that place it had no fear to feel ;  
The pomegranate, the apple, and the pear,  
That fruit and flowers at once made shift to bear,  
Not yet decayed therefore, and in them hung  
Bright birds that elsewhere sing not, but here sung  
As sweetly as the small brown nightingales  
Within the wooded, deep Laconian vales.

But right across the vale, from side to side,  
A high white wall all further view did hide,  
But that above it, vane and pinnacle  
Rose up, of some great house beyond to tell,  
And still betwixt these, mountains far away  
Against the sky rose shadowy, cold, and grey.

She, standing in the yellow morning sun,  
Could scarcely think her happy life was done,  
Or that the place was made for misery ;  
Yea, some lone heaven it rather seemed to be,  
Which for the coming band of gods did wait.  
But trembling 'midst her hope, she took her way  
Unto a little door midmost the wall,  
And still on odorous flowers her feet did fall,  
And round about her did the strange birds sing,

*Share, Ploughshare.*

*Laconian vales.* Laconia was the southern tract of the Peloponnesus, in which stood Sparta.

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Praising her beauty in their carolling.  
Thus coming to the door, when now her hand  
First touched the lock, in doubt she needs must  
stand,

And to herself she said, " Lo, now the trap !  
And yet, alas ! whatever now may hap,  
How can I 'scape the ill which waiteth me ?  
Let me die now ! " and herewith, tremblingly,  
She raised the latch, and her sweet sinless eyes  
Beheld a garden like a Paradise,  
Void of mankind, fairer than words can say,  
Wherein did joyous harmless creatures play  
After their kind, and all amidst the trees  
Were strange-wrought founts and wondrous images ;  
And glimmering 'twixt the boughs could she behold  
A house made beautiful with beaten gold,  
Whose open doors in the bright sun did gleam ;  
Lonely, but not deserted did it seem.

Long time she stood debating what to do,  
But at the last she passed the wicket through,  
Which, shutting elamorously behind her, sent  
A pang of fear throughout her as she went ;  
But when through all that green place she had  
passed,

And by the palace porch she stood at last,  
And saw how wonderfully the wall was wrought,  
With curious stones from far-off countries brought,  
And many an image and fair history  
Of what the world has been, and yet shall be,  
And all set round with golden craftsmanship,  
Well-wrought as some renowned cup's royal lip,  
She had a thought again to turn aside :  
And yet again, not knowing where to bide,  
She entered softly, and with trembling hands  
Holding her gown ; the wonder of all lands  
Met there the wonders of the land and sea.

Soon sceing that no evil thing came near,  
A little she began to lose her fear,

And gaze upon the wonders of the place,  
And in the silver mirrors saw her face  
Grown strange to her amidst that loneliness,  
And stooped to feel the web her feet did press,  
Wrought by the brown slim-fingered Indian's toil  
Amidst the years of war and vain turmoil ;  
Or she the figures of the hangings felt,  
Or daintily the unknown blossoms smelt,  
Or stood and pondered what new thing might mean  
The images of knight and king and queen  
Wherewith the walls were pictured here and there,  
Or touched rich vessels with her fingers fair,  
And o'er her delicate smooth cheek would pass  
The fixed bubbles of strange works of glass :  
So wandered she amidst these marvels new  
Until anigh the noontide now it grew.

At last she came unto a chamber cool  
Paved cunningly in manner of a pool,  
Where red fish seemed to swim through floating  
weed

And at the first she thought it so indeed,  
And took the sandals quickly from her feet,  
But when the glassy floor these did but meet  
The shadow of a long-forgotten smile  
Her anxious face a moment did beguile ;  
And crossing o'er, she found a table spread  
With dainty food, as delicate white bread  
And fruits piled up and covered savoury meat,  
As though a king were coming there to eat,  
For the worst vessel was of beaten gold.

Now when these dainties Psyche did behold  
She fain had eaten, but did nowise dare,  
Thinking she saw a god's feast lying there.  
But as she turned to go the way she came  
She heard a low soft voice call out her name,  
Then she stood still, and trembling gazed around,  
And seeing no man, nigh sank upon the ground.  
Then through the empty air she heard the voice.

"O lovely one, fear not! rather rejoice  
That thou art come unto thy sovereignty:  
Sit now and eat, this feast is but for thee,  
Yea, do whatso thou wilt with all things here,  
And in thine own house cast away thy fear,  
For all is thine, and little things are these  
So loved a heart as thine, awhile to please.

"Be patient! thou art loved by such a one  
As will not leave thee mourning here alone,  
But rather cometh on this very night;  
And though he needs must hide him from thy sight  
Yet all his words of love thou well mayst hear,  
And pour thy woes into no careless ear.

"Bethink thee then, with what solemnity  
Thy folk, thy father, did deliver thee  
To him who loves thee thus, and void of dread  
Remember, sweet, thou art a bride new-wed."

Now hearing this, did Psyche, trembling sore,  
And yet with lighter heart than heretofore,  
Sit down and eat, till she grew scarce afraid;  
And nothing but the summer noise she heard  
Within the garden. Then, her meal being done,  
Within the window-seat she watched the sun  
Changing the garden-shadows, till she grew  
Fearless and happy, since she deemed she knew  
The worst that could befall, while still the best  
Shone a fair star far off: and 'mid the rest  
This brought her after all her grief and fear,  
She said, "How sweet it would be, could I hear  
Soft music mate the drowsy afternoon,  
And drown awhile the bees' sad murmuring tune  
Within these flowering limes." E'en as she spoke,  
A sweet-voiced choir of unknown unseen folk  
Singing to words that match the sense of these  
Hushed the faint music of the linden trees.

(Some time later, Psyche fell happily asleep, her invisible husband beside her.)

The sun was high when Psyche woke again,  
And turning to the place where he had lain  
And seeing no one, doubted of the thing  
That she had dreamed it, till a fair gold ring,  
Unseen before, upon her hand she found,  
And touching her bright head she felt it crowned  
With a bright circlet ; then withal she sighed,  
And wondered how the oracle had lied,  
And wished her father knew it, and straightway  
Rose up and clad herself. So passed away  
The days and nights, until upon a day  
As in the shade, at noon she lay asleep,  
She dreamed that she beheld her sisters weep,  
And her old father clad in sorry guise,  
Grown foolish with the weight of miseries,  
Her friends black-clad and moving mournfully,  
And folk in wonder landed from the sea,  
At such a fall of such a matchless maid,  
And in some press apart her raiment laid  
Like precious relics, and an empty tomb  
Set in the palace telling of her doom.

Therefore she wept in sleep, and woke with tears  
Still on her face, and wet hair round her ears,  
And went about unhappily that day,  
Framing a gentle speech wherewith to pray  
For leave to see her sisters once again,  
That they might know her happy, and her pain  
Turned all to joy, and honour come from shame.

And so at last night and her lover came,  
And midst their fondling, suddenly she said,  
" O Love, a little time we have been wed,  
And yet I ask a boon of thee this night."

" Psyche," he said, " if my heart tells me right,  
This thy desire may bring us bitter woe,  
For who the shifting chance of fate can know ?

*Night and her lover came.* Example of condensed sentence, or zeugma.



Yet, forasmuch as mortal hearts are weak,  
To-morrow shall my folk thy sisters seek,  
And bear them hither ; but before the day  
Is fully ended must they go away.  
And thou—beware—for, fresh and good and true,  
Thou knowest not what worldly hearts may do,  
Or what a curse gold is unto the earth.  
Beware lest from thy full heart, in thy mirth,  
Thou tell'st the story of thy love unseen :  
Thy loving, simple heart, fits not a queen."

So the next day, for joy that they should come,  
Would Psyche further deck her strange new home,  
And even as she 'gan to think the thought,  
Quickly her will by unseen hands was wrought,  
Who came and went like thoughts. Yea, how should I  
Tell of the works of gold and ivory,  
The gems and images, those hands brought there ;  
The prisoned things of earth, and sea, and air,  
They brought to please their mistress ? Many a beast  
Such as King Bacchus in his reckless feast  
Makes merry with—huge elephants, snow-white  
With gilded tusks, or dusky-grey with bright  
And shining chains about their wrinkled necks ;  
The mailed rhinoceros, that of nothing recks ;  
Dusky-maned lions ; spotted leopards fair  
That through the cane-brake move, unseen as air ;  
The deep-mouthed tiger, dread of the brown man ;  
The eagle, and the peacock, and the swan—  
—These be the nobles of the birds and beasts.  
But wherewithal, for laughter at their feasts,  
They brought them the gods' jesters, such as be  
Quick-chattering apes, that yet in mockery  
Of anxious men wrinkle their ugly brows ;  
Strange birds with pouches, birds with beaks like  
prows

*King Bacchus*, God of wine. He was a youthful god, fond of  
extravagant revelry.

Of merchant-ships, with tufted crests like threads,  
With unimaginable monstrous heads.

Lo, such as these, in many a gilded cage

They brought, or chained for fear of sudden rage.

Then strewed they scented branches on the floor,

And hung rose-garlands up by the great door,

And wafted incense through the bowers and halls,

And hung up fairer hangings on the walls,

And filled the baths with water fresh and clear,

And in the chambers laid apparel fair,

And spread a table for a royal feast.

Then when from all these labours they had ceased,

Psyche they sung to sleep with lullabies ;

Who slept not long, but opening soon her eyes,

Beheld her sisters on the threshold stand :

Then did she run to take them by the hand,

And laid her cheek to theirs, and murmured words

Of little meaning, like the moan of birds,

While they bewildered stood and gazed around,

Like people who in some strange land have found

One that they thought not of ; but she at last

Stood back, and from her face the strayed locks

cast,

And, smiling through her tears, said, " Ah, that ye

Should have to weep such useless tears for me !

Alas, the burden that the city bears

For nought ! O me, my father's burning tears,

That into all this honour I am come !

Nay, does he live yet ? Is the ancient home

Still standing ? do the galleys throng the quays ?

Do the brown Indians glitter down the ways

With rubies as of old ? But by what road

*Of merchant-ships . . . heads.* Notice how, if happily chosen, a polysyllabic Latin word in the second line of a couplet composed of simple and mostly Saxon words is particularly effective.

*Then . . . feast.* Note the symmetrical compound sentence. Note also how frequently he prefers colons and semicolons where to-day full stops would be used. What effect has this on the pace of the poem ?

Have ye been brought to this my new abode ? ”

“ Sister,” said one, “ I rose up from my bed  
It seems this morn, and being apparelled,  
And walking in my garden, in a swoon  
Helpless and unattended I sank down,  
Wherefrom I scarce am waked, for as a dream  
Dost thou with all this royal glory seem,  
But for thy kisses and thy words, O love.”

“ Yea, Psyche,” said the other, “ as I drove  
The ivory shuttle through the shuttle-race,  
All was changed suddenly, and in this place  
I found myself, and standing on my feet,  
Where me with sleepy words this one did greet.  
Now, sister, tell us whence these wonders come  
With all the godlike splendour of your home.”

“ Sisters,” she said, “ more marvels shall ye see  
When ye have been a little while with me,  
Whereof I cannot tell you more than this  
That ’midst them all I dwell in ease and bliss,  
Well-loved and wedded to a mighty lord,  
Fair beyond measure, from whose loving word  
I know that happier days await me yet.  
But come, my sisters, let us not forget  
To seek for empty knowledge ; ye shall take  
Some little gifts for your lost sister’s sake ;  
And whatso wonders ye may see or hear  
Of nothing frightful have ye any fear.”  
Her kindness then but fed the fire of greed  
Within their hearts—her gifts, the rich attire  
Wherewith she clad them, where like sparks of fire  
The many-coloured gems shone ’midst the pearls,  
The soft silks’ winding lines, the work of girls  
By the Five Rivers ; their fair marvellous crowns,  
Their sandals’ fastenings worth the rent of towns,  
Zones and carved rings, and nameless wonders fair,

All things her faithful slaves had brought them there,  
Given amid kisses, made them not more glad ;  
Since in their hearts the ravening worm they had  
That love slays not, nor yet is satisfied  
While aught but he has aught ; yet still they tried  
To look as they deemed loving folk should look,  
And still with words of love her bounty took.

Now having reached the place where they should eat,  
Ere 'neath the canopy the three took seat,  
The elder sister unto Psyche said,  
" And he, dear love, the man that thou hast wed,  
Will he not wish to-day thy kin to see ?  
Then could we tell of thy felicity

The better, to our folk and father dear."  
Then Psyche reddened, " Nay, he is not here,"  
She stammered, " neither will be here to-day,  
For mighty matters keep him far away."

" Alas ! " the younger sister said, " Say then,  
What is the likeness of this first of men ;  
What sayest thou about his loving eyne,  
Are his locks black, or golden-red as thine ? "  
" Black-haired like me," said Psyche, stammering  
And looking round, " what say I ? like the king  
Who rules the world, he seems to me at least—  
Come, sisters, sit, and let us make good feast !  
My darling and my love ye shall behold  
I doubt not soon, his crispy hair of gold,  
His eyes unseen ; and ye shall hear his voice,  
That in my joy ye also may rejoice."

Then did they hold their peace, although indeed  
Her stammering haste they did not fail to heed.  
But at their wondrous royal feast they sat  
Thinking their thoughts, and spoke of this or that  
Between the bursts of music, until when

*The ravening worm, Envy and greed.*

*Eyne, Eyes.*

The sun was leaving the abodes of men ;  
And then must Psyche to her sisters say  
That she was bid, her husband being away,  
To suffer none at night to harbour there,  
No, not the mother that her body bare  
Or father that begat her, therefore they  
Must leave her now, till some still happier day.  
And therewithal more precious gifts she brought  
Whereof not e'en in dreams they could have thought,  
Things whereof noble stories might be told ;  
And said : " These matters that you here behold  
Shall be the worst of gifts that you shall have ;  
Farewell, farewell ! and may the high gods save  
Your lives and fame ; and tell our father dear  
Of all the honour that I live in here,  
And how that greater happiness shall come  
When I shall reach a long-enduring home."  
Then these, though burning through the night to  
stay,

Spake loving words, and went upon their way,  
When weeping she had kissed them ; but they wept  
Such tears as traitors do, for as they stepped  
Over the threshold, in each other's eyes  
They looked, for each was eager to surprise  
The envy that their hearts were filled withal,  
That to their lips came welling up like gall.

" So," said the first, " this palace without folk,  
These wonders done with none to strike a stroke,  
This singing in the air, and no one seen,  
These gifts too wonderful for any queen,  
The trance wherein we both were wrapt away,  
And set down by her golden house to-day—  
These are the deeds of gods, and not of men ;  
And fortunate the day was to her, when  
Weeping she left the house where we were born,  
And all men deemed her shamed and most forlorn."  
Then said the other, reddening in her rage,

"She is the luckiest one of all this age ;  
 And yet she might have told us of her case,  
 What god it is that dwelleth in the place,  
 Nor sent us forth like beggars from her gate.  
 And yet who knows but she may get a fall ?  
 The strongest tower has not the highest wall,  
 Think well of this, when you sit safe at home."

By this unto the river were they come,  
 Where waited Zephyrus unseen, who cast  
 A languor over them that quickly passed  
 Into deep sleep, and on the grass they sank ;  
 Then straightway did he lift them from the bank,  
 And quickly each in her fair house set down,  
 Then flew aloft above the sleeping town.

Long in their homes they brooded over this,  
 And how that Psyche nigh a goddess is ;  
 While all folk deemed that she quite lost had been,  
 For naught they said of all that they had seen.

Till she that threw the golden apple down  
 Upon the board, and lighted up Troy town,  
 On dusky wings came flying o'er the place,  
 And seeing Psyche with her happy face  
 Asleep beneath some fair tree blossoming,  
 Into her sleep straight cast an evil thing ;  
 Whereby she dreamed she saw her father laid  
 Panting for breath beneath the golden shade  
 Of his great bed's embroidered canopy,  
 And with his last breath moaning heavily  
 Her name and fancied woes ; thereat she woke,  
 And this ill dream through all her quiet broke,  
 And when next morn her love from her would go,  
 And going, as it was his wont to do,  
 Would kiss her sleeping, he must find the tears

*She that threw*, The goddess of Discord. At the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, this goddess, piqued that she had not been invited, threw a golden apple into the midst of the guests, with the inscription, "To be given to the most beautiful." This led ultimately to the siege of Troy, and infinite woe.

Filling the hollows of her rosy ears  
And wetting half the golden hair that lay  
'Twixt him and her : then did he speak and say,  
" O Love, why dost thou lie awake and weep,  
Who for content shouldst have good heart to sleep  
This cold hour ere the dawning ? " Nought she said,  
But wept aloud. Then cried he, " By my head !  
Whate'er thou wishest I will do for thee ;  
Yea, if it make an end of thee and me."

" O Love," she said, " I scarce dare ask again,  
Yet is there in mine heart an aching pain  
To know what of my father is become :  
So would I send my sisters to my home,  
Because I doubt indeed they never told  
Of all my honour in this house of gold ;  
So now of them a great oath would I take."

He said, " Alas ! and hast thou been awake  
For them indeed ? who in my arms asleep  
Mightst well have been ; for their sakes didst thou  
weep,

Who mightst have smiled to feel my kiss on thee ?  
Yet as thou wishest once more shall it be,  
Because my oath constrains me, and thy tears.  
And yet again beware, and make these fears  
Of none avail ; nor waver any more,  
I pray thee : for already to the shore  
Of all delights and joys thou drawest nigh."

He spoke, and from the chamber straight did fly  
To highest heaven, and going softly then,  
Wearied the father of all gods and men  
With prayers for Psyche's immortality.

Meantime went Zephyrus across the sea,  
To bring her sisters to her arms again,  
Though of that message little was he fain,  
Knowing their malice and their cankered hearts.

*The father, Jove.*

For now these two had thought upon their parts,  
And made up a false tale for Psyche's ear ;  
For when awaked, to her they drew anear,  
Sobbing, their faces in their hands they hid,  
Nor when she asked them why this thing they did  
Would answer aught, till trembling Psyche said,  
" Nay, nay, what is it ? is our father dead ?  
Or do ye weep these tears for shame that ye  
Have told him not of my felicity,  
To make me weep amidst my new-found bliss ?  
Be comforted, for short the highway is  
To my forgiveness : this day shall ye go  
And take him gifts, and tell him all ye know  
Of this my unexpected happy lot."

Amidst fresh sobs one said : " We told him not ;  
But by good counsel did we hide the thing,  
Deeming it well that he should feel the sting  
For once, than for awhile be glad again,  
And after come to suffer double pain."

" Alas ! what mean you, sister ? " Psyche said,  
For terror waxing pale as are the dead.  
" O sister, speak ! " " Child, by this loving kiss,"  
Spake one of them, " and that remembered bliss  
We dwelt in when our mother was alive,  
Or ever we began with ills to strive,  
By all the hope thou hast to see again  
Our aged father and to soothe his pain,  
I charge thee tell me,—Hast thou seen the thing  
Thou callest Husband ? "

Breathless, quivering,

Psyche cried out, " Alas ! what sayest thou ?  
What riddles wilt thou speak unto me now ? "

" Alas ! " she said ; " then is it as I thought.  
Sister, in dreadful places have we sought  
To learn about thy case, and thus we found  
A wise man, dwelling underneath the ground  
In a dark awful cave : he told to us  
A horrid tale thereof, and piteous,



That thou wert wedded to an evil thing,  
 A serpent-bodied fiend of poisonous sting,  
 Bestial of form, yet therewith lacking not  
 E'en such a soul as wicked men have got.  
 Thus ages long ago the gods made him,  
 And set him in a lake hereby to swim ;  
 But every hundred years he hath this grace,  
 That he may change within his golden place  
 Into a fair young man by night alone.  
 Alas, my sister, thou hast cause to groan !  
 What sayest thou ?—*His words are fair and soft ;  
 He raineth loving kisses on me oft,  
 Weeping for love ; he tells me of a day  
 When from this place we both shall go away,  
 And he shall kiss me then no more unseen,  
 The while I sit by him a glorious queen—*  
 —Alas, poor child ! it pleaseth thee, his kiss ?  
 Then must I show thee why he doeth this :  
 Because he willeth for a time to save  
 Thy body, wretched one ! that he may have  
 Both child and mother for his watery hell—  
 Ah, what a tale this is for me to tell !

“ Thou prayest us to save thee, and we can ;  
 Since for nought else we sought that wise old man,  
 Who for great gifts and seeing that of kings  
 We both were come, has told us all these things,  
 And given us a fair lamp of hallowed oil  
 That he has wrought with danger and much toil ;  
 And thereto has he added a sharp knife,  
 In forging which he well-nigh lost his life,  
 About him so the devils of the pit  
 Came swarming—O, my sister, hast thou it ? ”

Straight from her gown the other one drew out  
 The lamp and knife, which Psyche, dumb with doubt  
 And misery at once, took in her hand.

Then said her sister, “ From this doubtful land  
 Thou gav'st us royal gifts a while ago,  
 But these we give thee, though they lack for show,

Shall be to thee a better gift,—thy life.  
Put now in some sure place this lamp and knife,  
And when he sleeps rise silently from bed  
And hold the hallowed lamp above his head,  
And swiftly draw the charmed knife across  
His cursed neck, thou well mayst bear the loss,  
Nor shall he keep his man's shape more, when he  
First feels the iron wrought so mysticly :  
But thou, flee unto us, we have a tale,  
Of what has been thy lot within this vale,  
Of what we have 'scaped therefrom, which we shall do  
By virtue of strange spells the old man knew.  
Farewell, sweet sister ! here we may not stay,  
Lest in returning he should pass this way ;  
But in the vale we will not fail to wait  
Till thou art loosened from thine evil fate."

Thus went they, and for long they said not aught,  
Fearful lest any should surprise their thought,  
But in such wise had envy conquered fear,  
That they were fain that eve to bide anear  
Their sister's ruined home ; but when they came  
Unto the river, on them fell the same  
Resistless languor they had felt before,  
And from the blossoms of that flowery shore  
Their sleeping bodies soon did Zephyr bear,  
For other folk to hatch new ills and care.

But on the ground sat Psyche all alone,  
The lamp and knife beside her, and no moan  
She made, but silent let the long hours go,  
Till dark night closed around her and her woe.

Yet driven by her sisters' words at last,  
And by remembrance of the time now past,  
When she stood trembling, as the oracle  
With all its fearful doom upon her fell,  
She to her hapless wedding chamber turned,  
And while the waxen tapers freshly burned  
She laid those dread gifts ready to her hand,  
Then quenched the lights, and by the bed did stand,

Turning these matters in her troubled mind ;  
 And sometimes hoped some glorious man to find  
 Beneath the lamp, fit bridegroom for a bride  
 Like her ; ah, then ! with what joy to his side  
 Would she creep back in the dark silent night ;  
 But whiles she quaked at thought of what a sight  
 The lamp might show her ; the hot rush of blood  
 The knife might shed upon her as she stood,  
 The dread of some pursuit, the hurrying out,  
 Through rooms where every sound would seem a shout,  
 Into the windy night among the trees,  
 Where many a changing monstrous sight one sees,  
 When nought at all has happened to chill the blood.

But as among these evil thoughts she stood,  
 She heard him coming, and straight crept to bed,  
 And felt him touch her with a new-born dread,  
 And durst not answer to his words of love.  
 But when he slept, she rose that tale to prove,  
 And sliding down as softly as might be,  
 And moving through the chamber quietly,  
 She gat the lamp within her trembling hand,  
 And long, debating still these things, did stand  
 In that thick darkness, till she seemed to be  
 A dweller in some black eternity,  
 And what she once had called the world did seem  
 A hollow void, a colourless mad dream ;  
 For she felt so alone—three times in vain  
 She moved her heavy hand, three times again  
 It fell adown ; at last throughout the place  
 Its flames glared, lighting up her woeful face,  
 While images of fearful things did flit  
 Before her eyes ; thus, raising up the hand  
 That bore the lamp, one moment did she stand

*Whiles*, At times. The passage following is suggestive of the Dagger Scene in *Macbeth*.

*But as, etc.* Is this paragraph a convincing account of the incident, or not ? Is there skill in the telling of it ?

As man's time tells it, and then suddenly  
Opened her eyes, but scarce kept back a cry  
At what she saw ; for there before her lay  
The very Love brighter than dawn of day ;  
And as he lay there smiling, her own name  
His gentle lips in sleep began to frame,  
And as to touch her face his hand did move ;  
O then, indeed, her faint heart swelled for love,  
And she began to sob, and tears fell fast  
Upon the bed.—But as she turned at last  
To quench the lamp, there happed a little thing  
That quenched her new delight, for flickering  
The treacherous flame cast on his shoulder fair  
A burning drop ; he woke, and seeing her there  
The meaning of that sad sight knew full well,  
Nor was there need the piteous tale to tell.

Then on her knees she fell with a great cry,  
For in his face she saw the thunder nigh,  
And she began to know what she had done,  
And saw herself henceforth, unloved, alone,  
Pass onward to the grave ; and once again  
She heard the voice she now must love in vain.

“ O wavering heart, farewell ! be not afraid  
That I with fire will burn thy body fair,  
Or cast thy sweet limbs piecemeal through the air ;  
The fates shall work thy punishment alone,  
And thine own memory of our kindness done.

“ Farewell ! though I, a god, can never know  
How thou canst lose thy pain, yet time will go  
Over thine head, and thou mayst mingle yet  
The bitter and the sweet, nor quite forget,  
Nor quite remember, till these things shall seem  
The wavering memory of a lovely dream.”

Therewith he caught his shafts up and his bow,  
And striding through the chambers did he go,  
Light all around him ; and she, wailing sore,  
Still followed after ; but he turned no more,

And when into the moonlit night he came  
From out her sight he vanished like a flame,  
And on the threshold till the dawn of day  
Through all the changes of the night she lay.

At daybreak, when she lifted up her eyes,  
She looked around with heavy dull surprise,  
And rose to enter the fair golden place ;  
But then remembering all her piteous case  
She turned away, lamenting very sore,  
And wandered down unto the river shore ;  
There, at the head of a green pool and deep,  
She stood so long that she forgot to weep,  
And the wild things about the water-side  
From such a silent thing cared not to hide ;  
The dace pushed 'gainst the stream, the dragon-fly,  
With its green-painted wing went flickering by ;  
The water-hen, the lusted kingfisher,  
Went on their ways and took no heed of her ;  
The little reed-birds never ceased to sing,  
And still the eddy, like a living thing,  
Broke into sudden gurgles at her feet.  
But 'midst these fair things, on that morning sweet,  
How could she, weary creature, find a place ?  
She moved at last, and lifting up her face,  
Gathered her raiment up and cried, " Farewell,  
O fairest lord ! and since I cannot dwell  
With thee in heaven, let me now hide my head  
In whatsoever dark place dwell the dead ! "

And with that word she leapt into the stream,  
But the kind river even yet did deem  
That she should live, and, with all gentle care,  
Cast her ashore within a meadow fair,  
Upon the other side, where Shepherd Pan  
Sat looking down upon the water wan,  
Goat-legged and merry, who called out, " Fair maid,

*Pan*, God of flocks and shepherds, represented as with horns and goat's feet, dancing, and playing on " panpipes."

Why goest thou hurrying to the feeble shade  
Whence none return? Well do I know thy pain,  
For I am old, and have not lived in vain;  
Thou wilt forget all that within a while,  
And on some other happy youth wilt smile;  
And sure he must be dull indeed if he  
Forget not all things in his ecstasy  
At sight of such a wonder made for him,  
That in that clinging gown makes mine eyes swim,  
Old as I am: but to the god of Love  
Pray now, sweet child, for all things can he move."

Weeping she passed him, but full reverently,  
And well she saw that she was not to die  
Till she had filled the measure of her woe.  
So through the meads she passed, half blind and  
slow,

And on her sisters somewhat now she thought;  
And, pondering on the evil they had wrought,  
The veil fell from her, and she saw their guile.

"Alas!" she said, "can death make folk so vile?  
Sisters, alas, for what ye used to be!

Once did I think, whatso might hap to me,  
Still at the worst, within your arms to find  
A haven of pure love; then were ye kind,  
Then was my joy e'en as my very own—  
And now, and now, if I can be alone  
That is my best: but that can never be,  
For your unkindness still shall stay with me  
When ye are dead—But thou, my love! my dear!  
Wert thou not kind?—I should have lost my fear  
Within a little—Yea, and e'en just now  
With angry godhead on thy lovely brow,  
Still thou wert kind—And art thou gone away  
For ever? I know not, but day by day  
Still will I seek thee till I come to die,  
And nurse remembrance of felicity  
Within my heart, although it wound me sore;  
For what am I but thine for evermore!"

Thenceforth her back upon the world she turned  
As she had known it ; in her heart there burned  
Such deathless love, that still untired she went :  
The huntsman dropping down the woody bent,  
In the still evening, saw her passing by ;  
Like a thin dream she passed the clattering town ;  
On the thronged quays she watched the ships come in  
Patient, amid the strange outlandish din ;  
Unscared she saw the sacked towns' miseries,  
And marching armies passed before her eyes.  
And still of her the god had such a care  
None did her wrong, although alone and fair.  
Through rough and smooth she wandered many a day,  
Till all her hope had well-nigh passed away.

Meanwhile the sisters, each in her own home,  
Waited the day when outcast she should come  
And ask their pity ; when perchance, indeed,  
They looked to give her shelter in her need,  
And with soft words such faint reproaches take  
As she durst make them for her ruin's sake ;  
But day passed day, and still no Psyche came,  
And while they wondered whether, to their shame,  
Their plot had failed, or gained its end too well,  
And Psyche slain, no tale thereof could tell.—  
Amidst these things, the eldest sister lay  
Asleep one evening of a summer day,  
Dreaming she saw the god of Love anigh,  
Who seemed to say unto her lovingly,  
“ Hail unto thee, fair sister of my love ;  
Nor fear me for that thou her faith didst prove,  
And found it wanting, for thou, too, art fair,  
Her place unfilled ; rise then, and have no care  
For father or for friends, but go straightway  
Unto the rock where she was borne that day ;  
There, if thou hast a will to be my bride,  
Put thou all fear of horrid death aside,

And leap from off the cliff, and there will come  
My slaves, to bear thee up and take thee home.  
Haste then, before the summer night grows late,  
For in my house thy beauty I await ! ”

So spake the dream ; and through the night did  
sail,

And to the other sister bore the tale ;  
While this one rose nor doubted of the thing,  
Such deadly pride unto her heart did cling ;  
Then hastily rich raiment on her cast  
And through the sleeping serving-people passed,  
And looked with changed eyes on the moonlit street,  
Nor scarce could feel the ground beneath her feet.  
But long the time seemed to her, till she came  
There where her sister once was borne to shame ;  
And when she reached the bare cliff's rugged brow  
She cried aloud, “ O Love, receive me now,  
Who am not all unworthy to be thine ! ”  
And with that word, her jewelled arms did shine  
Outstretched beneath the moon, and with one breath  
She sprung to meet the outstretched arms of Death,  
The only god that waited for her there,  
And in a gathered moment of despair  
A hideous thing her trait'rous life did seem.

But with the passing of that hollow dream  
The other sister rose, and as she might,  
Arrayed herself alone in that still night,  
And so stole forth, and making no delay  
Came to the rock anigh the dawn of day ;  
No warning there her sister's spirit gave,  
No doubt came nigh her the doomed soul to save,  
But with a fever burning in her blood,  
With glittering eyes and crimson cheeks she stood  
One moment on the brow, the while she cried,  
“ Receive me, Love, chosen to be thy bride  
From all the million women of the world ! ”  
Then o'er the cliff her wicked limbs were hurled,



Nor has the language of the earth a name  
For that surprise of terror and of shame.

Now, 'midst her wanderings, on a hot noontide,  
Psyche passed down a road, where, on each side  
The yellow cornfields lay, although as yet  
Unto the stalks no sickle had been set ;  
The lark sung over them, the butterfly  
Flickered from ear to ear distractedly,  
The kestrel hung above, the weasel peered  
From out the wheat-stalks on her unafraid,  
Along the road the trembling poppies shed  
On the burnt grass their crumpled leaves and red ;  
Most lonely was it, nothing Psyche knew  
Unto what land of all the world she drew ;  
Aweary was she, faint and sick at heart,  
Bowed to the earth by thoughts of that sad part  
She needs must play : some blue flower from the corn  
That in her fingers erewhile she had borne,  
Now dropped from them, still clung unto her gown ;  
Over the hard way hung her head adown  
Despairingly, but still her weary feet  
Moved on half conscious, her lost love to meet.

So going, at the last she raised her eyes,  
And saw a grassy mound before her rise  
Over the yellow plain, and thereon was  
A marble fane with doors of burnished brass,  
That 'twixt the pillars set about it burned ;  
So thitherward from off the road she turned.

But when its threshold now her feet did gain,  
She, looking through the pillars of the shrine,  
Beheld therein a golden image shine  
Of golden Ceres ; then she passed the door,  
And with bowed head she stood awhile before

*Nor has . . . shame.* Note the cunning use of suggestion here.

*Kestrel*, A species of small hawk.

*Ceres*, Goddess of agriculture ; in Greek, Demeter. Golden because of the golden wheat.

The smiling image, striving for some word  
That did not name her lover and her lord,  
Until 'midst rising tears at last she prayed :

“ O kind one, if while yet I was a maid  
I ever did thee pleasure, on this day  
Be kind to me, poor wanderer on the way,  
Who strive my love upon the earth to meet !  
Then let me rest my weary, doubtful feet  
Within thy quiet house a little while.  
And on my rest if thou wouldst please to smile,  
And send me news of my own love and lord,  
It would not cost thee, lady, many a word.”

But straight from out the shrine a sweet voice came,  
“ O Psyche, though of me thou hast no blame,  
And though indeed thou sparedst not to give  
What my soul loved, while happy thou didst live,  
Yet little can I give now unto thee,  
Since thou art rebel, slave, and enemy  
Unto the love-inspiring Queen ; this grace  
Thou hast alone of me, to leave this place  
Free as thou camest, though the lovely one  
Seeks for the sorceress who entrapped her son  
In every land, and has small joy in aught,  
Until before her presence thou art brought.”

Then Psyche, trembling at the words she spake,  
Durst answer nought, nor for that counsel's sake  
Could other offerings leave except her tears,  
As now, tormented by the new-born fears  
The words divine had raised in her, she passed  
The brazen threshold once again, and cast  
A dreary hopeless look across the plain,  
Whose golden beauty now seemed nought and vain  
Unto her aching heart ; then down the hill  
She went, and crossed the shallows of the rill,  
And wearily she went upon her way,  
Nor any homestead passed upon that day,  
Nor any hamlet, and at night lay down  
Within a wood, far off from any town.

There, waking at the dawn, did she behold,  
 Through the green leaves, a glimmer as of gold,  
 And, passing on, amidst an oak grove found  
 A gold-adorned pillared temple round,  
 Whose walls were hung with rich and precious things,  
 Worthy to be the ransom of great kings ;  
 And in the midst of gold and ivory  
 An image of Queen Juno did she see ;  
 Then her heart swelled within her, and she thought,  
 " Surely the gods hereto my steps have brought,  
 And they will yet be merciful and give  
 Some little joy to me, that I may live  
 Till my love finds me." Then upon her knees  
 She fell, and prayed, " O Crown of goddesses,  
 I pray thee, give me shelter in this place,  
 Nor turn away from me thy much-loved face,  
 If ever I gave golden gifts to thee  
 In happier times when my right hand was free."

Then from the inmost shrine there came a voice  
 That said, " It is so, well mayst thou rejoice  
 That of thy gifts I yet have memory,  
 Wherefore mayst thou depart forewarned and free ;  
 Since she that won the golden apple lives,  
 And to her servants mighty gifts now gives  
 To find thee out, in whatso land thou art,  
 For thine undoing : loiter not, depart !  
 For what immortal yet shall shelter thee  
 From her that rose from out the unquiet sea ? "

Then Psyche moaned out in her grief and fear,  
 " Alas ! and is there shelter anywhere  
 Upon the green flame-hiding earth ? " said she,  
 " Or yet beneath it is there peace for me ?  
 O Love, since in thine arms I cannot rest,  
 Or lay my weary head upon thy breast,  
 Have pity yet upon thy love forlorn,  
 Make me as though I never had been born ! "

*She that won the golden apple, Venus, to whom it was awarded by  
 Paris, Prince of Troy.*

Then wearily she went upon her way,  
And so, about the middle of the day,  
She came before a green and flowery place,  
Walled round about in manner of a chase,  
Whereof the gates as now were open wide ;  
Fair grassy glades and long she saw inside  
Betwixt great trees, down which the unscared deer  
Were playing ; yet a pang of deadly fear,  
She knew not why, shot coldly through her heart,  
And thrice she turned as though she would depart,  
And thrice returned, and in the gateway stood  
With wavering feet ; small flowers as red as blood  
Were growing up amid the soft green grass,  
And here and there a fallen rose there was,  
And on the trodden grass a silken lace,  
As though crowned revellers had passed by the place ;  
The restless sparrows chirped upon the wall  
And faint far music on her ears did fall,  
And from the trees within, the pink-foot doves  
Still told their weary tale unto their loves,  
And all seemed peaceful more than words could say.  
Then she, whose heart still whispered, " Keep  
away,"

Was drawn by strong desire unto the place,  
So toward the greenest glade she set her face,  
Murmuring, " Alas ! and what a wretch am I,  
That I should hear the summer's greenery !  
Yea, and is death now any more an ill,  
When lonely through the world I wander still."  
But when she was amidst those ancient groves,  
Whose close green leaves and choirs of moaning doves  
Shut out the world, then so alone she seemed,  
So strange, her former life was but as dreamed,  
Beside the hopes and fears that drew her on ;  
Till so far through that green place she had won,  
That she a rose-hedged garden could behold

Before a house made beautiful with gold ;  
And o'er the hedge beheld the heads of girls  
Embraced by garlands fresh and orient pearls,  
And heard sweet voices murmuring ; then a thrill  
Of utmost joy all memory seemed to kill  
Of good or evil, and her eager hand  
Was on the wicket, then her feet did stand  
Upon new flowers, the while her dizzied eyes  
Gazed wildly round on half-seen mysteries,  
And wandered from unnoting face to face.

For round a fountain 'midst the flowery place  
Did she behold full many a minstrel girl ;  
While nigh them, on the grass in giddy whirl,  
Bright raiment and white limbs and sandalled feet  
Flew round in time unto the music sweet.

But when a little Psyche's eyes grew clear,  
A sight they saw that brought back all her fear  
A hundredfold, though neither heaven nor earth  
To such a fair sight elsewhere could give birth ;  
Because apart, upon a golden throne  
Of marvellous work, a woman sat alone,  
Watching the dancers with a smiling face,  
Whose beauty sole had lighted up the place.  
A crown there was upon her head ; her feet  
Lay amid roses—ah, how kind she seemed !  
What depths of love from out her grey eyes beamed.

Well might the birds leave singing on the trees  
To watch in peace that crown of goddesses,  
Yet well might Psyche sicken at the sight,  
And feel her feet wax heavy, her head light ;  
For now at last her evil day was come,  
Since she had wandered to the very home  
Of her most cruel and bitter enemy.

Half-dead, yet must she turn about to flee,  
But as her eyes back o'er her shoulder gazed,  
And with weak hands her clinging gown she raised,  
And from her lips unwitting came a moan,

She felt strong arms about her body thrown,  
And, blind with fear, was haled along till she  
Saw floating by her faint eyes dizzily  
That vision of the pearls and roses fresh,  
The golden carpet and the rosy flesh.

Then, as in vain she strove to make some sound,  
A sweet voice seemed to pierce the air around  
With bitter words ; her doom rang in her ears,  
He felt the misery that lacketh tears.

Come hither, damsels, and the pearl behold  
That hath no price ? See now the thrice tried gold,  
That all men worshipped, that a god would have  
To be his bride ! how like a wretched slave  
She cowers down, and lacketh even voice  
To plead her cause ! Come, damsels, and rejoice,  
That now once more the waiting world will move,  
Since she is found, the well-loved soul of love !  
“ And thou, poor wretch, what god hath led thee  
here ?

Art thou so lost in this abyss of fear,  
Thou canst not weep thy misery and shame ?  
Canst thou not even speak thy shameful name ? ”

But even then the flame of fervent love  
In Psyche's tortured heart began to move,  
And gave her utterance, and she said, “ Alas !  
Surely the end of life has come to pass  
For me, who have been bride of very Love,  
Yet love still bides in me, O Seed of Jove,  
For such I know thee ; slay me, nought is lost !  
For had I had the will to count the cost  
And buy my love with all this misery,  
Thus and no otherwise the thing should be.  
Would I were dead, my wretched beauty gone,  
No trouble now to thee or any one ! ”

And with that last word did she hang her head,  
As one who hears not, whatsoe'er is said ;  
But Venus rising with a dreadful cry  
Said. “ O thou fool, I will not let thee die !

But thou shalt reap the harvest thou hast sown  
And many a day thy wretched lot bemoan.  
Thou art my slave, and not a day shall be  
But I will find some fitting task for thee,  
Nor will I slay thee till thou hop'st again.  
What, thinkest thou that utterly in vain  
Jove is my sire, and in despite my will  
That thou canst mock me with thy beauty still?  
Come forth, O strong-armed, punish this new slave,  
That she henceforth a humble heart may have."

All round about the damsels in a ring  
Were drawn to see the ending of the thing,  
And now as Psyche's eyes stared wildly round  
No help in any face of them she found  
As from the fair and dreadful face she turned  
In whose grey eyes such steadfast anger burned;  
Yet midst her agony she scarcely knew  
What thing it was the goddess bade them do,  
And all the pageant, like a dreadful dream  
Hopeless and long-enduring grew to seem.

But when her breaking heart again waxed hot  
With dreadful thoughts and prayers unspeakable  
As all their bitter torment on her fell,  
When she her own voice heard, nor knew its sound,  
And like red flame she saw the trees and ground,  
Then first she seemed to know what misery  
To helpless folk upon the earth can be.  
Above sat Venus, calm, and passing fair,  
And gazed with gentle eyes, and unmoved smile.

At last to them some dainty sign she made  
To hold their cruel hands, and therewith bade  
To bear her slave new gained from out her sight  
And keep her safely till the morrow's light:  
So her across the sunny sward they led  
With fainting limbs, and heavy downcast head,  
And into some nigh lightless prison cast  
To brood alone o'er happy days long past  
And all the dreadful times that yet should be.

But she being gone, one moment pensively  
The goddess did the distant hills behold,  
Then bade her girls bind up her hair of gold,  
And 'gainst the hard earth arm her lovely feet :  
Then she went forth, some shepherd king to meet  
Deep in the hollow of a shaded vale,  
To make his woes a long enduring tale.



And many another brought from far-off lands,  
Which mingling more with swift and ready hands  
They piled into a heap confused and great.  
And then said Venus, rising from her seat,  
"Slave, here I leave thee, but before the night  
These mingled seeds thy hands shall set aright,  
All laid in heaps, each after its own kind,  
And if in any heap I chance to find  
An alien seed, thou knowest since yesterday  
How disobedient slaves the forfeit pay."

Therewith she turned and left the palace fair  
And from its outskirts rose into the air,  
And flew until beneath her lay the sea,  
Then, looking on its green waves lovingly,  
Somewhat she dropped, and low adown she flew  
Until she reached the temple that she knew  
Within a sunny bay of her fair isle.

But Psyche sadly labouring all the while  
With hopeless heart felt the swift hours go by,  
And knowing well what bitter mockery  
Lay in that task, yet did she what she might  
That something should be finished ere the night,  
And she a little mercy yet might ask ;  
But the first hours of that long feverish task  
Passed amid mocks ; for oft the damsels came.  
About her, and made merry with her shame,  
And laughed to see her trembling eagerness,  
And how, with some small lappet of her dress,  
She winnowed out the wheat, and how she bent  
Over the millet, hopelessly intent ;  
And how she guarded well some tiny heap  
But just begun, from their long raiments' sweep :  
But at the last these left her labouring,  
Not daring now to weep, lest some small thing  
Should 'scape her blinded eyes, and soon far off  
She heard the echoes of their careless scoff.

Longer the shades grew, quicker sank the sun,

Yet make no haste, but ere the sun is down  
Cast it before my feet from out thy gown ;  
Surely thy labour is but light to-day."

Then sadly went poor Psyche on her way,  
Wondering wherein the snare lay, for she knew  
No easy thing it was she had to do ;  
Nor had she failed indeed to note the smile  
Wherewith the goddess praised her for the guile  
That she, unhappy, lacked so utterly.

Amidst these thoughts she crossed the flowery lea,  
And came unto the glittering river's side ;  
And, seeing it was neither deep nor wide,  
She drew her sandals off, and to the knee  
Girt up her gown, and by a willow-tree  
Went down into the water, and but sank  
Up to mid-leg therein ; but from the bank  
She scarce had gone three steps, before a voice  
Called out to her, " Stay, Psyche, and rejoice  
That I am here to help thee, a poor reed,  
The soother of the loving hearts that bleed,  
The pourer forth of notes, that oft have made  
The weak man strong, and the rash man afraid.

" Sweet child, when by me now thy dear foot trod,  
I knew thee for the loved one of our god ;  
Then prithee take my counsel in good part ;  
Go to the shore again, and rest thine heart  
In sleep awhile, until the sun get low,  
And then across the river shalt thou go  
And find these evil creatures sleeping fast,  
And on the bushes whereby they have passed  
Much golden wool ; take what seems good to thee,  
And ere the sun sets go back easily.  
But if within that mead thou sett'st thy feet  
While yet they wake, an ill death shalt thou meet,  
For they are of a cursed man-hating race,  
Bred by a giant in a lightless place."

But at these words soft tears filled Psyche's eyes  
As hope of love within her heart did rise ;

And when she saw she was not helpless yet  
Her old desire she would not quite forget ;  
But turning back, upon the bank she lay  
In happy dreams till nigh the end of day ;  
Then did she cross and gather of the wool,  
And with her bosom and her gown-skirt full  
Came back to Venus at the sun-setting ;  
But she afar off saw it glistening  
And cried aloud, " Go, take the slave away,  
And keep her safe for yet another day,  
And on the morning will I think again  
Of some fresh task, since with so little pain  
She doeth what the gods find hard enow ;  
For since the winds were pleased thus wail to blow  
Unto my door, a fool I were indeed,  
If I should fail to use her for my need."

So her they led away from that bright sun,  
Now scarce more hopeful that the task was done,  
Since by those bitter words she knew full well  
Another tale the coming day would tell.

the bearer of his servant, friend of Love,  
Who, when he saw her, straightway towards her flew,  
And asked her why she wept, and when he knew,  
And who she was, he said, "Cease all thy fear,  
For to the black waves I thy ewer will bear,  
And fill it for thee ; but, remember me,  
When thou art come unto thy majesty."

Then straight he flew, and through the dragons'  
wings  
Went carelessly, nor feared their clatterings,  
But set the ewer, filled, in her right hand,  
And on that day saw many another land.

Then Psyche through the night toiled back again,  
And as she went, she thought, "Ah ! all is vain,  
For though once more I just escape indeed,  
Yet hath she many another will at need ;  
And to these days when I my life first learn,  
With unavailing longing shall I turn,  
When this that seemeth now so horrible  
Shall then seem but the threshold of her hell.  
Alas ! what shall I do ? for even now  
In sleep I see her pitiless white brow,  
And hear the dreadful sound of her commands,  
While with my helpless body and bound hands  
I tremble underneath the cruel whips ;  
And oft for dread of her, with quivering lips  
I wake, and waking know the time draws nigh  
When nought shall wake me from that misery—  
Behold, O Love, because of thee I live,  
Because of thee, with these things still I strive."

Now with the risen sun her weary feet  
The fresh-strewn roses of the floor did meet  
Upon the marble threshold of the place ;  
But she being brought before the matchless face,  
Fresh with the new life of another day,  
Beheld her wondering, for the goddess lay

With half-shut eyes upon her golden bed,  
And when she entered scarcely turned her head,  
But smiling spake, "The gods are good to thee,  
Nor shalt thou always be mine enemy;  
But one more task I charge thee with to-day,  
For unto Proserpine take thou thy way,  
And give this golden casket to her hands,  
And pray the fair Queen of the gloomy lands  
To fill the void shell with that beauty rare  
That long ago as queen did set her there;  
Nor needest thou to fail in this new thing,  
Who hast to-day the heart and wit to bring  
This dreadful water, and return alive;  
And, that thou may'st the more in this thing strive,  
If thou returnest I will show at last  
My kindness unto thee, and all the past  
Shalt thou remember as an ugly dream."

And now at first to Psyche did it seem  
Her heart was softening to her, and the thought  
Swelled her full heart to sobbing, and it brought  
Into her yearning eyes half-happy tears:  
But on her way cold thoughts and dreadful fears  
Rose in her heart, for who indeed could teach  
A living soul that dread abode to reach  
And yet return? and then once more it seemed  
The hope of mercy was but lightly dreamed,  
And she remembered that triumphant smile,  
And needs must think, "This is the final wile.  
Alas! what trouble must a goddess take  
So weak a thing as this poor heart to break.

"See now this tower! from off its top will I  
Go quick to Proserpine—ah, good to die!  
Rather than hear those shameful words again,  
And bear that unimaginable pain  
She has been treasuring up against this day!  
O Love, farewell, thou seest all hope is dead,  
Thou seest what torments on my wretched head  
Thy bitter mother doth not cease to heap;

Farewell, O Love, for thee and life I weep.

Alas, my foolish heart ! alas, my sin !

Alas, for all the love I could not win ! ”

Now was this tower both old enongh and grey,  
Built by some king forgotten many a day,  
And no man dwelt there, now that bitter war  
From that bright land had long been driven afar ;  
There now she entered, trembling and afraid ;  
But 'neath her doubtful steps the dust long laid  
In utter rest, rose up into the air,  
And wavered in the wind that down the stair  
Rushed to the door ; then she drew back a pace,  
Moved by the coldness of the lonely place  
That for so long had seen no ray of sun.

Then shuddering did she hear these words begun,  
Like a wind's moaning voice, “ Have thou no fear  
The hollow words of one long slain to hear !  
Thou livest, and thy hope is not yet dead,  
And if thou heedest me, thou well may'st tread  
The road to hell, and yet return again.

“ For thou must go o'er many a hill and plain  
Until to Sparta thou art come at last,  
And when the ancient city thou hast passed  
A mountain shalt thou reach, that men now call  
Great Tænarus, that riseth like a wall  
'Twixt plain and upland, therein shalt thou find  
The wide mouth of a cavern huge and blind,  
Wherein there cometh never any sun,  
Whose dreadful darkness all things living shun ;  
This shun thou not, but yet take care to have  
Three honey-cakes thy soul alive to save,  
And in thy mouth a piece of money set,  
Then through the dark go boldly, and forget  
The stories thou hast heard of death and hell,  
And heed my words, and then shall all be well.

*Tænarus*, Where was supposed to be one of the entrances to hell.  
It is in the extreme south of Greece.

“ For when thou hast passed through that cavern  
blind,

A place of dim grey meadows shalt thou find.  
Wherethrough to inmost hell a path doth lead,  
Which follow thou, with diligence and heed ;  
For as thou goest there, thou soon shalt see  
Two men like peasants loading painfully  
A fallen ass ; these unto thee will call  
To help them, but give thou no heed at all,  
But pass them swiftly ; and then soon again  
Within a shed three crones shalt thou see plain  
Busily weaving, who shall bid thee leave  
The road and fill their shuttles while they weave.  
But slacken not thy steps for all their prayers,  
For these are shadows only, and set snares.

“ At last thou comest to a water wan,  
And at the bank shall be the ferryman  
Surly and grey ; and when he asketh thee  
Of money for thy passage, hastily  
Show him thy mouth, and straight from off thy lip  
The money will he take, and in his ship  
Embark thee and set forward ; but beware,  
For on thy passage is another snare :  
From out the waves a grisly head shall come,  
Most like thy father thou hast left at home,  
And pray for passage long and piteously,  
But on thy life of him have no pity,  
Else art thou lost ; also thy father lives,  
And in the temples of the high gods gives  
Great daily gifts for thy returning home.

“ When thou unto the other side art come,  
A palace shalt thou see of fiery gold,  
And by the door thereof shalt thou behold  
An ugly triple monster, that shall yell  
For thine undoing ; now behold him well,  
And into each mouth of him cast a cake,

And no more heed of thee then shall he take,  
And thou mayst pass into a glorious hall  
Where many a wonder hangs upon the wall ;  
But far more wonderful than anything,  
The fair slim consort of the gloomy King,  
Arrayed all royally shalt thou behold,  
Who sitting on a carven throne of gold,  
Whene'er thou enterest shall rise up to thee,  
And bid thee welcome there most lovingly,  
And pray thee on a royal bed to sit,  
And share her feast ; yet eat thou not of it,  
But sitting on the ground eat bread alone,  
Then do thy message kneeling by her throne ;  
And when thou hast the gift, return with speed ;  
The sleepy dog of thee shall take no heed,  
The ferryman shall bear thee on thy way  
Without more words, and thou shalt see the day  
Unharm'd if that dread box thou openest not ;  
But if thou dost, then death shall be thy lot.

“ O beautiful, when safe thou com'st again,  
Remember me, who lie here in such pain  
Unburied ; set me in some tomb of stone,  
When thou hast gathered every little bone ;  
But never shalt thou set thereon a name,  
Because my ending was with grief and shame,  
Who was a Queen like thee long years ago,  
And in this tower so long have lain alone ”

Then, pale and full of trouble, Psyche went  
Bearing the casket, and her footsteps bent  
To Lacedæmon, and thence found her way  
To Tænarus, and there the golden day  
For that dark cavern did she leave behind ;  
Then, going boldly through it, did she find  
The shadowy meads which that wide way ran through,

*The fair slim consort, Proserpina, wife of King Pluto.*



Under a seeming sky 'twixt grey and blue ;  
No wind blew there, there was no bird or tree,  
Or beast, and dim grey flowers she did but see  
That never faded in that changeless place,  
And if she had but seen a living face  
Most strange and bright she would have thought it  
there ;

Or if her own face, troubled yet so fair,  
The still pools by the roadside could have shown  
The dimness of that place she might have known ;  
But their dull surface cast no image back,  
For all but dreams of light that land did lack.

So on she passed, still noting everything,  
Nor yet had she forgotten there to bring  
The honey-cakes and money : in a while  
She saw those shadows striving hard to pile  
The bales upon the ass, and heard them call,  
" O woman, help us ! for our skill is small  
And we are feeble in this place indeed ; "  
But swiftly did she pass, nor gave them heed,  
Though after her from far their cries they sent.

Then a long way adown that road she went  
Not seeing aught, till, as the Shade had said,  
She came upon three women in a shed  
Busily weaving, who cried, " Daughter, leave  
The beaten road a while, and as we weave  
Fill thou our shuttles with these endless threads,  
For here our eyes are sleepy, and our heads  
Are feeble in this miserable place."  
But for their words she did but mend her pace,  
Although her heart beat quick as she passed by.

Then on she went, until she could espy  
The wan, grey river lap the leaden bank  
Wherefrom there sprouted sparsely sedges rank,  
And there the road had end in that sad boat  
Wherein the dead men unto Minos float ;

*Minos, One of the judges in hell.*

There stood the ferryman, who now, seeing her, said,  
"O living soul, that thus among the dead  
Hast come, on whatso errand, without fear,  
Know thou that penniless none passes here ;  
Of all the coins that rich men have on earth  
To buy the dreadful folly they call mirth,  
But one they keep when they have passed the  
grave

That o'er this stream a passage they may have ;  
And thou, though living, are but dead to me,  
Who here, immortal, see mortality  
Pass, stripped of this last thing that men desire,  
Unto the changeless meads or changeless fire."

Speechless she showed the money on her lip  
Which straight he took, and set her in the ship,  
And then the wretched, heavy oars he threw  
Into the rowlocks and the flood they drew ;  
Silent, with eyes that looked beyond her face,  
He laboured, and they left the dreary place.

But midmost of that water did arise  
A dead man, pale, with ghastly staring eyes  
That somewhat like her father still did seem,  
But in such wise as figures in a dream ,  
Then with a lamentable voice it cried,  
"O daughter, I am dead, and in this tide  
For ever shall I drift, an unnamed thing,  
Who was thy father once, a mighty king,  
Unless thou takest pity on me now,  
And bidd'st the ferryman turn here his prow,  
That I with thee to some abode may cross ;  
And little unto thee will be the loss,  
And unto me the gain will be to come  
To such a place as I may call a home,  
Being now but dead and empty of delight,  
And set in this sad place 'twixt dark and light."

Now at these words the tears ran down apace  
For memory of the once familiar face,  
And those old days, wherein, a little child

'Twixt awe and love beneath those eyes she smiled ;  
False pity moved her very heart, although  
The guile of Venus she failed not to know,  
But tighter round the casket clasped her hands,  
And shut her eyes, remembering the commands  
Of that dead queen : so safe to land she came.

And there in that grey country, like a flame  
Before her eyes rose up the house of gold,  
And at the gate she met the beast threefold,  
Who ran to meet her open-mouthed, but she  
Unto his jaws the cakes cast cunningly,  
But trembling much : then on the ground he lay  
Lolling his heads, and let her go her way ;  
And so she came into the mighty hall,  
And saw those wonders hanging on the wall,  
That all with pomegranates was covered o'er  
In memory of the meal on this sad shore,  
Whereby fair Enna was bewept in vain,  
And this became a kingdom and a chain.

But on a throne, the Queen of all the dead  
She saw therein with gold-embraced head,  
In royal raiment, beautiful and pale ;  
Then with slim hands her face did Psyche veil  
In worship of her, who said, " Welcome here,  
O messenger of Venus ! thou art dear  
To me thyself indeed, for of thy grace  
And loveliness we know e'en in this place ;  
Rest thee then, fair one, on this royal bed,  
And with some dainty food shalt thou be fed ;  
Ho, ye who wait, bring in the tables now ! "

Therewith were brought things glorious of show  
On cloths and tables royally beseen,

*Enna*, A town in Sicily, from near which Proserpina, while in a flowery meadow, was carried off to be wife to Pluto. In Hades she ate part of a pomegranate, and so, having eaten in the lower world, though she did gain entry to Olympus again, she had henceforth to spend one-third of every year with Pluto.

By damsels each one fairer than a queen,  
The very latches of whose shoes were worth  
The royal crown of any queen on earth ;  
But when upon them Psyche looked, she saw  
That all these dainty matters without flaw  
Were strange of shape and of strange-blended hues,  
So every cup and plate did she refuse  
Those lovely hands brought to her, and she said,  
" O Queen, to me amidst my awe and dread  
These things are nought, my message is not done,  
So let me rest upon this cold grey stone,  
And while my eyes no higher than thy feet  
Are lifted, eat the food that mortals eat."

Therewith upon the floor she sat her down  
And from the folded bosom of her gown  
Drew forth her bread and ate, while with cold eyes  
Regarding her 'twixt anger and surprise,  
The queen sat silent for awhile, then spoke,  
" Why art thou here, wisest of living folk ?  
Depart in haste, lest thou shouldst come to be  
Thyself a helpless thing and shadowy !  
Give me the casket then, thou need'st not say  
Wherefore thou thus hast passed the awful way ;  
Bide there, and for thy mistress shalt thou have  
The charm that beauty from all change can save."  
Then Psyche rose, and from her trembling hand  
Gave her the casket, and awhile did stand.

Then sighing scarcely could she turn away  
When with the casket came the queen once more,  
And said, " Haste now to leave this shadowy shore  
Before thou changest ; even now I see  
Thine eyes are growing strange, thou look'st on me  
E'en as the linnet looks upon the snake.  
Behold, thy wisely-guarded treasure take,  
And let thy breath of life no longer move  
The shadows with the memories of past love."

But Psyche at that name, with quickened heart  
Turned eagerly, and hastened to depart  
Bearing that burden, hoping for the day ;  
Harmless, asleep, the triple monster lay,  
The ferryman did set her in his boat  
Unquestioned, and together did they float  
Over the leaden water back again :  
Nor saw she more those women bent with pain  
Over their weaving, or the fallen ass,  
But swiftly up the grey road did she pass  
And well-nigh now was come into the day  
By hollow Tanarus, but o'er the way  
The wings of Envy brooded all unseen ;  
Because indeed the cruel and fair Queen  
Knew well how she had sped ; so in her breast,  
Against the which the dreadful box was pressed,  
Grew up at last this foolish, harmful thought.

" Behold how far this beauty I have brought  
To give unto my bitter enemy ;  
Might I not still a very goddess be  
If this were mine which goddesses desire ;  
Yea, what if this hold swift consuming fire,  
Why do I think it good for me to live,  
That I my body once again may give  
Into her cruel hands—come death ! come life !  
And give me end to all the bitter strife ! "

Therewith down by the wayside did she sit  
And turned the box round, long regarding it ;  
But at the last, with trembling hands, undid  
The clasp, and fearfully raised up the lid ;  
But what was there she saw not, for her head  
Fell back, and nothing she remembered  
Of all her life, yet nought of rest she had,  
The hope of which makes hapless mortals glad ;  
For while her limbs were sunk in deadly sleep  
Most like to death, over her heart 'gan creep  
Ill dreams ; so that for fear and great distress  
She would have cried, but in her helplessness.

Could open not her mouth, or frame a word ;  
Although the threats of mocking things she heard,  
And seemed, amidst new forms of horror bound,  
To watch strange endless armies moving round,  
With all their sleepless eyes still fixed on her,  
Who from that changeless place should never stir.  
Moveless she lay, and in that dreadful sleep  
Scarce had the strength some few slow tears to weep.

And there she would have lain for evermore,  
A marble image on the shadowy shore  
In outward seeming, but within oppressed  
With torments, knowing neither hope nor rest.  
But as she lay the Phoenix flew along  
Going to Egypt, and knew all her wrong,  
And pitied her, beholding her sweet face,  
And flew to Love and told him of her case ;  
And Love in guerdon of the tale he told,  
Changed all the feathers of his neck to gold,  
And he flew on to Egypt glad at heart.  
But Love himself gat swiftly for his part  
To rocky Tænarus, and found her there  
Laid half a furlong from the outer air.

But at that sight outburst the smothered flame  
Of love, when he remembered all her shame,  
The stripes, the labour, and the wretched fear,  
And kneeling down he whispered in her ear,  
“ Rise, Psyche, and be mine for evermore,  
For evil is long tarrying on this shore.”  
Then when she heard him, straightway she arose,  
And from her fell the burden of her woes ;  
And yet her heart within her well-nigh broke,  
When she from grief to happiness awoke ;  
And loud her sobbing was in that grey place,

*The Phoenix*, A fabulous bird, the only one of its kind, that after living a certain space of years makes a nest of spices in Arabia, flaps its wings to set it alight, burns itself to ashes, and then comes forth with new life to repeat its career.

And with sweet shame she covered up her face.  
But her dear hands, all wet with tears, he kissed,  
And taking them about each little wrist  
Drew them away, and in a sweet voice said,  
"Raise up again, O Psyche, that dear head,  
And of thy simpleness have no more shame ;  
Thou hast been tried, and cast away all blame  
Into the sea of woes that thou didst bear,  
The bitter pain, the hopelessness, the fear—  
Holpen a little, loved with boundless love  
Amidst them all—but now the shadows move  
Fast toward the west, earth's day is well-nigh done,  
One toil thou hast yet ; by to-morrow's sun  
Kneel the last time before my mother's feet,  
Thy task accomplished ; and my heart, O sweet,  
Shall go with thee to ease thy toilsome way :  
Farewell awhile ! but that so glorious day  
I promised thee of old, now cometh fast,  
When even hope thy soul aside shall cast,  
Amidst the joy that thou shalt surely win."

So saying, all that sleep he shut within  
The dreadful casket, and aloft he flew,  
But slowly she unto the cavern drew  
Scarce knowing if she dreamed, and so she came  
Unto the earth where yet the sun did flame  
Low down between the pine-trunks, tall and red,  
And with its last beams kissed her golden head.

With what words Love unto the Father prayed  
I know not, nor what deeds the balance weighed ;  
But this I know, that he prayed not in vain,  
And Psyche's life the heavenly crown shall gain ;  
So round about the messenger was sent  
To tell immortals of their King's intent,  
And bid them gather to the Father's hall.

But while they got them ready at his call,  
On through the night was Psyche toiling still,  
To whom no pain nor weariness seemed ill

Since now once more she knew herself beloved ;  
But when the unresting world again had moved  
Round into golden day, she came again  
To that fair place where she had borne such pain,  
And flushed and joyful in despite her fear,  
Unto the goddess did she draw anear,  
And knelt adown before her golden seat,  
Laying the fatal casket at her feet ;  
Then at the first no word the Sea-born said,  
But looked afar over her golden head,  
Pondering upon the mighty deeds of fate ;  
While Psyche still, as one who well may wait,  
Knelt, calm and motionless, nor said a word,  
But ever thought of her sweet lovesome lord.

At last the Queen said, " Girl, I bid thee rise,  
For now hast thou found favour in mine eyes ;  
And I repent me of the misery  
That in this place thou hast endured of me,  
Although because of it, thy joy indeed  
Shall now be more, that pleasure is thy meed."

Then bending, on the forehead did she kiss  
Fair Psyche, who turned red for shame and bliss ;  
But Venus smiled again on her, and said,  
" Go now, and bathe, and be as well arrayed  
As thou shouldst be, to sit beside my son ;  
I think thy life on earth is well-nigh done."

So thence once more was Psyche led away,  
And cast into no prison on that day,  
But brought unto a bath beset with flowers,  
Made dainty with a fount's sweet-smelling showers,  
And there being bathed, e'en in such fair attire  
As veils the glorious Mother of Desire  
Her limbs were veiled, then in the wavering shade,  
Amidst the sweetest garden was she laid,  
And while the damsels round her watch did keep,  
At last she closed her weary eyes in sleep,  
And woke no more to earth, for ere the day



Had yet grown late, once more asleep she lay  
Within the West Wind's mighty arms, nor woke  
Until the light of heaven upon her broke,  
And on her trembling lips she felt the kiss  
Of very Love, and mortal yet, for bliss  
Must fall a-weeping still. Ah, me ! that I,  
Who late have told her woe and misery,  
Must leave untold the joy unspeakable  
That on her tender wounded spirit fell !  
Alas ! I try to think of it in vain,  
My lyre is but attuned to tears and pain,  
How shall I sing the never-ending day ?

Led by the hand of Love she took her way  
Unto a vale beset with heavenly trees,  
Where all the gathered gods and goddesses  
Abode her coming ; but when Psyche saw  
The Father's face, she fainting with her awe  
Had fallen, but that Love's arm held her up.

Then brought the cup-bearer a golden cup,  
And gently set it in her slender hand,  
And while in dread and wonder she did stand,  
The Father's awful voice smote on her ear,  
" Drink now, O beautiful, and have no fear !  
For with this draught shalt thou be born again,  
And live for ever free from care and pain."

Then, pale as privet, took she heart to drink,  
And therewithal most strange new thoughts did think,  
And unknown feelings seized her, and there came  
Sudden remembrance, vivid as a flame,  
Of everything that she had done on earth,  
Although it all seemed changed in weight and worth,  
Small things becoming great, and great things small ;  
And godlike pity touched her therewithal  
For her old self, for sons of men that die ;  
And that sweet new-born immortality  
Now with full love her rested spirit fed.

Then in that concourse did she lift her head,  
And stood at last a very goddess there,  
And all cried out at seeing her grown so fair.

So while in heaven quick passed the time away,  
About the ending of that lovely day,  
Bright shone the low sun over all the earth  
For joy of such a wonderful new birth.

## EPILOGUE

### LATER LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

"I always bless God for making anything so strong as an onion."  
MORRIS.

*His Strength and Energy.*—Though now thirty-six, Morris had not bated one jot of his exuberance bodily or mental. Just for fun, when describing passengers staggering luggage-cumbered off the gangway of a Channel steamer, it was characteristic of him to suit action to words by bundling a chair under each arm and picking up a scuttle of coal with his teeth. Indeed, his teeth were so strong that he could bite almost right through the woodwork of a window frame. His head was second only in hardness to that of the Miller's in Chaucer; and if the Miller could burst through unwieldy doors with his, Morris could at least butt a hole in a plaster wall and think nothing of it. And this strength needed an outlet, which his various crafts provided. But though strong, he was a most tender man. "Next Saturday when I turned up," wrote a friend, "he read us a lot of the story of Psyche. I recollect his remarking that it was very hard work writing that sort of thing. I took it he was speaking of the thrashing Psyche gets at the hands of Venus. He really felt for her, and was evidently glad it was over."

*His Observation.*—Contrary to what one would have

supposed, his eyes were expressionless, with that far-away, filmed look one sees in those of a commander-in-chief—or an eagle. Burne-Jones was not deceived by them: they were the eyes of an observer of genius. "They say nothing to you, nor much look at you, but are so swift, they have taken in everything there is to be seen while you are wondering when they will open. If you saw him, he wouldn't look at you but would know everything you had on, and all your expression, without being seen to look."

*Kelmscott Manor*, 1871.—And so he continued to have much to do, to make, and to see. And first, as he wanted a country home—for he had left the Red House after five years and settled in London—he took a most beautiful old place on a rivulet beyond a lonely village away in west Oxfordshire—namely, Kelmscott Manor House, all gabled and gardened, and full of Elizabethan memories, "a heaven on earth." And he was supremely happy there, renewing his old affection for all natural things. "O me! O me!" he exclaimed. "How I love the earth, and the seasons, and weather and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it! If I could but say or show how I love it!"

*His Viking Spirit*.—His heart filled with gladness at this satisfaction of his dreams, and his softer, more dreamy nature needing no further outlet for the moment, he began then to give expression to the Viking spirit that had already shown itself in *The Lovers of Gudrun*. First learning the Icelandic tongue, he and his teacher, one Eiríki Magnússon, and some others, went to Iceland. Awe-inspiring scenes prepared his mind for the treatment of the terrible; and in 1873, so much had his first visit inspired him, he went out again. Translating Icelandic sagas (or old heroic legends), he wrote in a more and more purely Anglo-Saxon style, which in its best moments was a new and powerful instrument for poetic expression.

Then (1875-76) he produced his Norse masterpiece, *Sigurd the Volsung*.

*Translations, Prose Romances, and Politics.*—All this time, his craftsmanship activities were continuing with unabated zeal. Yet new interests arose. He translated Latin and Greek classics; he wrote wondrous romances in a tapestried old prose, such as *The House of the Wolfings*, *The Roots of the Mountains*, and *The Well at the World's End*; and he threw himself heart and soul into politics, writing pamphlets, editing newspapers, delivering public speeches, and giving up time and money, fighting for an ideal future in which ugly work, machinery, and towns should be no more, but the golden age of Chaucer should come again.

*The Kelmscott Press*, 1891.—One last work must be mentioned, and that in a place of its own: the Kelmscott Press. Morris had always loved illuminated manuscripts and artistic print, and it had been one of his ambitions to set up a press which should produce in modern times books as beautifully printed, illustrated with woodcuts, illuminated, and bound, as in the Middle Ages. After learning the trade, and designing original type-founts, he finally started at Hammer-smith the Kelmscott Press (so called after his Oxfordshire home), and produced books unequalled in their time for artistry. In reverence for his master, he hoped to see completed a great edition of Chaucer, illustrated by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. But after 1891 his health failed, and he feared his hopes might not be realized. A journey to North Cape, Norway, failed to restore him; but he continued working as best he might. In 1896, when the Chaucer was nearing an end, he fidgeted over every delay. People inquired when he would like to have it all ready. "I'd like it finished to-morrow," he replied; "every day beyond to-morrow that it isn't done is one too many." The Easter holidays strained his temper to the utmost. "Four mouldy Sundays in a mouldy row, the press

shut, and Chaucer at a standstill." But on the 8th of May the printing was completed, and Morris's life's work was done.

He died painlessly, at Hammersmith, on the 3rd of October 1896, and was buried three days later in Kelmescott churchyard. No man had ever lived a fuller life.

## QUESTIONS ON "JASON"

1. Contexts : *ad lib.*
2. Translate any passage of *Jason* into the ordinary English of to-day ; or a passage out of a newspaper of to-day into Morris's phraseology.
3. Consider Jason's speech in the hall, towards the close of Book II. What do you gather from it of his capacity for leadership ? Give examples of his methods of tackling his followers in trying conditions, and indicate their outcome.
4. Contrast the bitter farewell speeches of the Harpies to the Argonauts with the speeches of the Witches in the last Witch Scene of *Macbeth*.
5. Describe the adventures of Jason up to his reaching Salmydessa. Illustrate with a sketch map.
6. By what means on his outward journey did Jason come to possess a valuable cargo ? What did it consist of ?
7. Describe the adventure of the Clashing Rocks. How could you account for it in a natural way ?
8. Summarize the description, at the close of Book VI., of the palace of Æetes. Show its chief qualities, and the art with which it is composed.
9. What were the trials to which Jason was put in the Field of Mars, and how did he acquit himself ? How far was his success due to himself ?
10. On what occasions, and why, does the magic prow of Argo speak ?
11. Show why it was out of the question for Jason to return by the same route as he had gone out.

12. Describe the adventures of the Argonauts between the Black Sea and the Baltic.

13. Outline the journey between the Baltic and Circe's isle.

14. Summarize Orpheus's song, "O death, that maketh life so sweet."

15. What happened on Circe's isle?

16. Contrast the songs of Orpheus and the Sirens.

17. Give an account of a Greek public offering of sacrifice to the gods. Contrast it with a Christian thanksgiving service.

18. Write a letter as from the Garden of the Hesperides to relate how you came there, and what you saw. Contrast as many of the things as you can with what one would probably find in a beautiful English garden.

19. Describe how Medea, appearing as an old crone, justifies herself before Pelias. Do you find her story convincing?

20. Relate how Medea compassed the death of Pelias while safeguarding her lover from blame.

21. In the Colchian wood, Artemis had threatened Medea with retribution for her pride. What shape did the punishment take, and how did Medea avenge her wrongs?

22. How far is Book XVII. an afterthought and a weak point in the poetic construction?

23. Draw up a scenario for the story, and compose captions as for a film.

24. Consider Jason as (a) a lover, (b) a hero.

25. Contrast the characters of Medea and Lady Macbeth.

26. Render a brief account of the story as it might have been told by Medea to the King of Athens.

27. What do you learn of the Greeks, their character and customs, from this story? Give as many illustrations as you can of their wiliness.

28. When, where, and how does Juno intervene in the story?



29. Give ten examples in *Jason* of the use of stock epithets. What can be said for and against their use?

30. Collect five examples each of (a) onomatopoeia, (b) alliteration, (c) simile, (d) metaphor, from *Jason*. Arrange the four heads according to the degree of difficulty in finding them.

31. Collect twenty archaisms from the poem, give their meaning, and state what general effect the presence of archaic diction has upon the reader.

32. Take a passage of 100 lines, and count the number of (a) end-stopped, (b) run-on lines. Do the same with a passage from *Cupid and Psyche*, and compare the results.

33. "Troublous thing and vain:" collect five other examples of this odd arrangement of adjectives, one before and one after the noun. Why is it effective?

34. Collect ten descriptions of or references to the sea in this poem, and then state what general impression Morris gives of it.

35. Learn by heart Orpheus's song, "O bitter sea, tumultuous sea," and compose one of your own, beginning "O noble hills, majestic hills."

36. Distinguish between sarcasm and irony, illustrating their use from this poem.

37. Examine some typical sentences in the poem to show (a) the length, (b) the grammatical structure Morris is inclined to use.

38. Quoting a ten-line passage from each work as criterion, show from *Jason*, *Ænone*, and *Macbeth* whether Morris's style is as metaphorical as Tennyson's and Shakespeare's.

39. Exhibit the metrical effects of Morris's fondness for monosyllables.

40. "*Jason* is the most complete revitalization of a mythological world in English. Practically all Greek myths are deducible from it." Give examples of such deductions.

41. "The whole atmosphere being dreamlike, the

divinities do not shock us as impossible." Discuss, with examples.

42. Illustrate the use of personal detail to make us accept the person himself as real—*e.g.*, of the nymphs, "And landing, felt the grass and flowers blue Against their unused feet."

43. Which passages in the poem would you single out as best for (a) reflection, (b) description, (c) action?

44. "Argo's journey flashes sidelights on the journey of life itself." Explain how.

45. "The Golden Fleece is the thousand complex desires and ambitions of life, and their inadequacy to satisfy." Would you challenge this view?

46. According to one theory, Medea is the Dawn, the Fleece the Rays of the Sun, the dragon is Drought, Æetes is Darkness, Glauce is the broad Daylight, the poisoned robe is Twilight, and Jason is the Sun. How far does this agree with the story?

47. What epic qualities has *Jason*?

48. Morris invented (a) the woodland life of young Jason, (b) Juno's speech at the crossing of the Anaurus, (c) Medea's secret mission to slay Pelias, and her change of form. Examine these parts and consider their value.

49. Of his style it has been said, "It is neither fast nor slow; it has no falls or foam; no sparkle or freshets. It has soft colours; in its bed the stones glisten. Never loud, never mute. It never reaches the sea: just flows into the ground. It leaves the memory of a mood rather than any distinct words. It is the least fatiguing medium for a long story." Make another metaphorical description of it for yourself.

50. "It is the decoration that holds us. There is fighting, and killing, and blows, but one does not mind much who does what." Illustrate and discuss this opinion.

51. How far is Morris like the æsthete figured in Tennyson's *Palace of Art*?

52. Give examples of anachronisms in *Jason* (e.g., Jason submits to Æetes' conditions "like a belted knight"; "He drank and swore for naught to leave that quest").

53. The requirements of good narrative poetry are: (a) subservience of incident to the revelation of character; (b) perfect clearness; (c) swiftness (e.g., there is no need to account for every day, only important days); (d) the end of the story must be indicated at the beginning, yet interest must be kept up; (e) only simple emotions and passions must be exhibited. Apply these tests to *Jason*.

54. Once when on a visit to his friend Blount in Sussex, Morris growled at the fine May weather: "I am a man of the North. I am disappointed at the fine weather we are having here. I had hoped it would rain, so that I could sit indoors and watch it beating at the windows." Bring out what this suggests about the temperament of Morris, and relate it to his life and poetry.

55. Give an account of the life of Morris up to the writing of *Jason*. How far was this poem the natural product of his life?

56. Discuss Morris's conception of narrative poets and poetry.

57. Disentangle the Greek and mediæval elements in *Jason*.

58. How far is *Jason* conventional in details?

## QUESTIONS ON "CUPID AND PSYCHE"

1. Account for the reply of the oracle of Apollo, and show how it was received by the populace. What do you learn from the latter of (a) the Greek temper, (b) Greek religious belief?
2. Learn the passage, "Then, smiling, towards the place the fair Wind went . . . edges of the sea," and compose a similar piece on the wintry East Wind.
3. Describe what Psyche beheld when she woke at dawn after her exposure on the hilltop.
4. What expressions would Morris use for: inexpressibly, extraordinary, destruction, designing, involuntarily?
5. Describe Psyche's discoveries in the palace, and the various "wonders of the land and sea."
6. Compose passages of verse in Morris's manner on (a) trees and their characteristics, or (b) animals
7. Examine Morris's list of the beasts, and find what his method of description is—by colour, or habit, etc.
8. Write a free prose version of the speeches of the sisters when they are all together at Cupid's palace.
9. What was the story made up by the wicked sisters?
10. Tell the story of how Psyche yielded to her sisters' desire and so lost her lover.
11. Illustrate Morris's restraint from his treatment of Cupid's farewell to Psyche.

12. Show Morris's employment of local detail to make the main figure convincing, by examining the picture he gives of Psyche on the morning after Cupid's flight.
13. Describe Psyche's approach to the dwelling of Venus.
14. What reception did Psyche receive at the hands of Venus?
15. Outline one of Psyche's three tests, and show how she passed it.
16. Describe Psyche's visit to Pluto's realm.
17. Show how the poem ends.
18. Contrast the characters of Psyche and Venus.
19. What other figures in classical mythology besides Cupid, Venus, and Psyche do you learn something about in this poem?
20. Invent a tale of your own based on the story of how the tower spoke to Psyche.
21. Draw up the story for cinema purposes, and write captions.
22. Consider how Justice is treated in this poem.
23. Morris disliked the Renaissance (e.g., St. Paul's Cathedral and Milton's poems); how would you relate this to his diction and general treatment of the theme in these two poems?
24. Morris calls Chaucer's verse "clear and sweet and strong." How far does this apply to his own verse in these poems?
25. Discuss and exemplify the simplicity of Morris in (a) choice of colours, (b) type of reflection, (c) choice of characters.
26. Illustrate from these poems Morris's love of woven fabrics.
27. "Morris is content with the simple and almost abstract types of facial expression that can be produced in tapestry." Defend or refute this.
28. "Morris's psychology is elementary and elemental, and goes little beyond such statements as,

Such good words said he, but the thoughts were bad.' " Illustrate this, and show that it has an indefinable power of suggestion as its virtue.

29. Morris has been compared in style with (a) Chaucer, (b) Keats. By comparisons of ten-line passages of *The Knight's Tale*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and one of these poems of Morris, examine the truth of these comparisons.

30. "In Morris the sense of wonder was paramount." Illustrate.

31. Morris is said by Mr. Noyes to have "a low scale of values" in description—*i e*, he employs general terms and not particular. Illustrate from *Cupid and Psyche*.

32. How far is *Cupid and Psyche* more dramatic than *Jason*?

33. Would you guess the following passage to be by Morris? Why?

"And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,  
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,  
Lotos and lilies "

34. Take any page of *Cupid and Psyche* and re-write it, deliberately shortening all the sentences by fresh punctuation and other needful adjustments.

35. How far would the following epigram by Gray make a motto for *Cupid and Psyche*?

"Where ignorance is bliss,  
'Tis folly to be wise."

36. Contrast the two poems in every way you can.

37. Illustrate and enlarge on the element of *tenderness* in this poem. How does it fit in with your idea of Morris the man?

38. Briefly tell the story of Morris's life after the publication of *The Earthly Paradise*. Show how it relates to his earlier life.

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